

UP & OUT

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



THE MINISTRY
COLLABORATIVE

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Foundation

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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 Lay leaders 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.

MY SOUL LONGS FOR YOU...

There are so many places of disconnection, detachment, and isolation in our culture. What role does the church have in moving into these fertile valleys where the Spirit is at work to heal, mend, and close the gaps?

- **LISTEN TO: “America Has a Loneliness Epidemic: Here are 6-Steps to Address It”** - This NPR clip from “All Things Considered,” speaks to the real issue of loneliness as a major health factor invading America today. We know that it’s happening among our community members, but what happens when it is creeping into our church leadership, too? This is a critical conversation that all church community members need to engage in so that it is not stigmatized and pushed into the shadows.
- **READ: “I left the church and now long for a ‘church for the nones”** - We know that people want meaningful relationships in community and the church has served that in the past. What does the church need to do to connect with people who are searching for that depth and hope?
- **READ: “The Real Reason People Leave Religion”** - Daniel Cox is a blogger for American Storylines and points to the changing demographics and shapes of our American families and how that also changes the time, interest, and value of religion as part of their everyday living. It should make ministry leaders stop and wonder what the church hasn’t been paying attention to as we walk the faith journey with the families in our communities.



“It is not our job to chase the ambulances of culture, but to invite people into the divine narrative... into the hope and healing that lies in Jesus Christ.”

- Jennifer Watley Maxell,
TMC Program Curator



Ultimately it's God's presence that equips us, because it helps us to see all those things in life that look like weaknesses or disadvantages and they become a testimony God uses for his glory'

-- Misha Cazas, Denver TMC



- **LISTEN TO: “Jesus in a Tangible Way: A Conversation with Misha Cazas”** - Rev. Michelle “Misha” Cazas serves as the Associate Pastor of Outreach and Community Care at West Side Church International in Denver, Colorado. She is a native Bolivian and has a passion for working with the migrant community and walking with them as they transition from their home nations.
- **LISTEN TO: “Nagging, Fulfillment, and Peace”** - Rev. Mark Ramsey speaks to Dr. William D. Watley and Rev. Jennifer Watley Maxell about vocational discernment and spiritual formation. They consider how things have shifted and changed across the generations as they consider calling. Four generations in ministry, they dig into what it looks like considering the call that is the thread that goes between the occupations each person has had. “An ongoing relationship with the Lord is key to ascertaining whether or not you are doing something that you need to do or want to do in order to keep from burning out.” - Dr. William D. Watley
- **READ: Religion has become a luxury good.** - Ryan Burge, a numbers analyst, and a pastor, tells us that the people who are the most likely to attend services this weekend are those with college degrees making \$60K-\$100K. In other words, middle-class professionals. What do we do with this trend?
- **READ: Belief in God is down, Spiritual Practices are Up!** - World Religion News gives us an interesting statistic from the latest Gallup Poll. We used to assume that if you weren't involved in church, then you weren't involved in the community, either. But, the research shows something different. “People who engage in spiritual practices are just as likely to be civic and community-minded as those who identify as religious.” What does this mean for the church?

The Church as a Trust Training Center

“A lack of faith in societal institutions triggered by economic anxiety, disinformation, mass-class divide and a failure of leadership has brought us to where we are today - deeply and dangerously polarized.” - 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Report

There’s no doubt that trust-building is an essential element of ministry, especially in a society plagued by entrenched ideologies, suspicion, and distrust in institutions. The church has a role in the weaving of social fabric for the sake of the common good and human flourishing .

- **READ: Are you trustworthy?** - Rev. Jennifer Watley Maxell gives a gentle nudge about the responsibilities all leaders and church-goers have in building, strengthening, and being trustworthy community members in our world today. She asks the question: What is your responsibility in being trustworthy?
- **READ: The Edelman U.S. Trust Report.** - It’s important for pastors and congregations to pay attention to the many forces and variables playing a role in trust and distrust, nationwide. As the Edelman report above notes, many challenges around trust are due to economic anxiety and growing gaps. The church is a variable in this dynamic.
- **READ: 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



- **READ: Religious Attendance and Trust**. Church used to be a great way to interact with folks who were different than you. ... Now, houses of worship have become monocultures
- **LISTEN TO: “Trusting your Gifting: A Conversation with Asa Lee”** – Rev. Dr. Asa Lee is the president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and points to the fact that as leaders, we have to trust the gifts, skills, and abilities God has blessed us with as we step boldly into new spaces of leadership.
- **READ: “Working class: Religious but not attending church.”** – While working-class Americans identify as religious at similar rates to their middle-and upper-class counterparts, they are less likely to be found in the pews. Why?
- **WATCH: “In Tech We Trust?” – Rachel Botsman** – Rachel Botsman is a renowned trust-researcher who invites institutions to think about how trust works and the leap that we all have to take in order to trust. Her talk challenges us to think about how we navigate the bridge between the known and unknown. As church leaders, this is an important concept to hold onto as we talk about faith.
- **WATCH: “What is Trust Actually?” – Simon Sinek** – Simon Sinek is an author, leadership trainer, and inspirational speaker. He is described as an “unshakeable optimist.” In this video, he tells the story of what trust looks like for the everyday person who is just trying to do their job. As the church what are we doing to help people be their “natural best?”





- **WATCH: “Trust Building is Not Optional: Gospel Witness and Mending the Social Fabric”** - A TMC Conversation with Amy Valdez Barker and Patrick Clayborn that focuses on our Gospel Witness as leaders who continue to build trust everywhere.
- **LISTEN TO: “How the Church Can Save the World: A Conversation with Rev. Dr. Allen Hilton”** - Rev. Dr. Hilton is the founder and leader of House United, an organization that brings people together across lines of political and racial difference for the common good. In this podcast, Facilitator Curator, Beth Daniel engages with Dr. Hilton on the importance of holding space for one another, even when differences run deep. This is a great conversation starter for leaning into the things that are disrupting our understanding of the Christian church today.



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Parents want to make sure they give their kids room to explore religious questions for themselves and don't want to do anything to alienate their kids or provoke teenage rebellion... [However], taking too light a touch with religious parenting comes at a cost. If kids do not receive a clear and consistent message from their parents that religion is important, they are likely to simply conclude that it is not important.

-- Jesse Smith, Sociologist



Discipleship is Not a Program

How do we let go of programming as an anchor to our ministries and lean into equipping people to be disciples in their everyday lives?

- **READ: What are people of no faith looking for in faith conversations?** - Barna Research states, “The top thing people look for in a conversation with a Christian is that they “listen without judgment.” People of no faith are also hoping for honesty about questions and doubts, and they don't want forced conclusions. The best learning environment, they express, is one marked by care and consideration.” Unfortunately, the research also states that most people do not get this. What are we as church leaders doing to foster this kind of judge-free listening in the people we lead who do have faith, and want to be good neighbors?
- **READ: Parenting in America Today** - Pew data tells us to pay attention! When it comes to their kid's faith and future, what are parents most concerned about? What are the implications of only 35% of parents indicating that it's "extremely" or "very" important to them that their children have beliefs similar to their own?

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Why did God give the Gospel in the first place? ... What is the Gospel? We need to back up and look at God's motive in giving it. When we do that, asking different questions causes different observations to emerge. That might help in the church to reframe this whole salvation conversation.

-Matthew Bates, Quincy Univ.



- **LISTEN TO: “Subversive Witness: A Conversation with Dominique DuBois Gillard”** - Author of “Subversive Witness: Scripture’s Call to Leverage Privilege” Rev. Dominique DuBois Gillard talks with Program Director, Adam Borneman about what it takes to grapple with our responsibility as Christian Disciples to face systemic sin and lean into discipleship through our actions. This podcast can challenge leaders to think about the privilege we have and where it can be used for positive change in our world.
- **LISTEN TO: “Your Mileage Will Vary: A Conversation with Matt Adair”** - Rev. Matt Adair founded Transformational Discipleship, a training and implementation platform that focuses on helping people be more like Jesus. He invites listeners to ponder what it will take to live a different kind of life as a follower of Jesus in today’s world. This resource can help us rethink what we mean when we say we want people to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Step Up! Speak Out!

What is the Spirit doing through preaching, teaching, and witness to transform individuals and communities?

- **LISTEN TO: Homiletical Magic Wand: A Conversation with Jared Alcantara** - Dr. Alcantara serves at George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University as the preaching professor. He talks with Rev. Mark Ramsey about learning from first-century preachers and thinking strategically.
- **LISTEN TO: A Secure Uncertainty: A Round Table Conversation on “I Am the Way, The Truth, and The Life”** - The Ministry Collaborative team comes together to dig deeper into what Christians mean by seeing Jesus as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Join them in this conversation as they step up and speak out about what grounds them in their ministry, their life journey, and their witness.

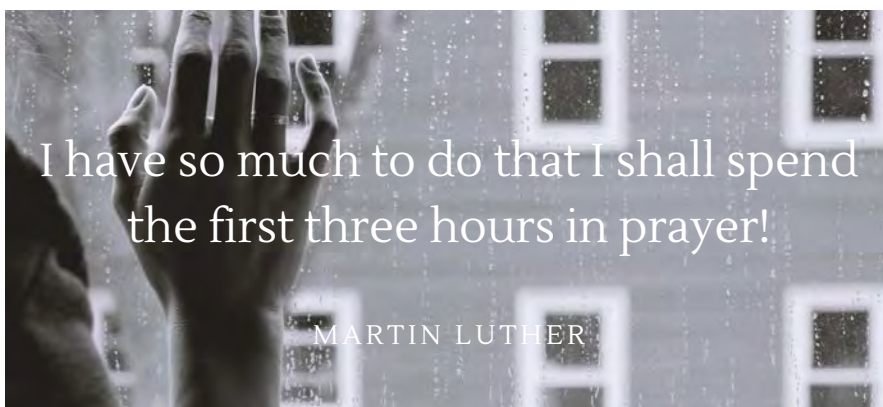
“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” ~ Psalm 27:1 (NRSV)

COURAGE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL THE VIRTUES, BECAUSE WITHOUT COURAGE YOU CAN'T PRACTICE ANY OTHER VIRTUE CONSISTENTLY.

Maya Angelou



- **WATCH: “3 Big Questions that Change Every Young Person”** - Dr. Kara Powell is chief of Leadership Formation and the Executive Director of The Fuller Youth Institute and professor of Youth and Family Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary. In this Theo Ed Talk she invites the audience to consider the three big questions that every young person you encounter is wrestling with. As we think about being called to more than just preaching every Sunday, this video challenges us to think about the next two generations we are called to reach for Jesus.
- **LISTEN TO: Why the Gospel? A Conversation with Matthew Bates** - Dr. Matthew Bates is professor of theology at Quincy University in Illinois. He authored, “Why the Gospel? Living the Good News of King Jesus with Purpose.” In this podcast, he speaks with Adam Borneman, Program Director, as they jump into thinking critically about what the Bible says about the Gospel. This is a great podcast to help people think about salvation holistically and raise questions that move listeners into a deeper faith.
- **READ: AI-Powered Preaching: How Much Should Silicon Valley Impact Sermon Prep** - If you haven’t even entertained the idea of AI-Powered Preaching, you must read this article. Aaron Earls, a senior writer at Lifeway Research, gives an interesting run-down on how AI is being used in churches and how it will continue to have a presence in our faith environments. Being aware and ready to address this rapidly evolving technology should be on the radar of every church leader.
- **LISTEN TO: “I Gotta Be Free: Jennifer Maxell and Stephen J. Thurston”** - Rev. Thurston is a self-described catalyst of transformation and serial entrepreneur. He joins Program Curator, Jennifer Maxell in a discussion about the freedom of speaking one’s mind, leading courageously, and stepping up and out when a community needs bold leadership.



REACH OUT

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