RENEWING IDENTITY IN GOD’S LIFE

- In era of disestablishment, going deeper …
  - Into God’s life
  - Into the neighborhood (whatever that is in today’s world)
- Rediscovering identity
PRIMARY CHALLENGES FACING US

- Theological and spiritual in character
  - Only 28% of Episcopal churches had ‘high spiritual vitality’ according to own members (2010 FACT Study, Hartford Seminary)

- Require us to mine our traditions for ‘treasures new and old’ (Mt 13:52)

- Are open-ended, complex and ambiguous (no easy answers)
GOD’S COMMUNAL LIFE

- Trinity—God ‘circulating around the neighborhood’ (*perichoresis*)
- Mutuality/reciprocity
- Shared life and personhood
- Difference without division
- Unity without uniformity
GOD’S COMMUNAL MISSION

- Creating others for interdependent relationship
- Calling when community breaks down
  - Working through particular people for sake of universal
- Incarnation: God shares our place
  - Relies on hospitality of neighborhood
  - Bears/suffers with us
- Raises to new life in power of Spirit
GOD’S MISSION HAS A CHURCH

- Community of Jesus and Spirit
- Our identity lies in our participation in God’s missional life
- “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church along the way.”
  – Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 64
FROM IMITATION TO PARTICIPATION

- From doing mission on God’s behalf to *participating* in triune God’s movement in world
- God’s dynamic agency, presence, initiative
- Beyond ‘practical atheism’
- Public Spirit: forming and reforming community
FROM BENEVOLENCE TO COMPANIONSHIP

- Christian mission involves forming community
- Accompanying (“bread with”)
- Turning strangers into friends
FROM PERFORMATIVE TO FORMATIVE

- Rather than doing ministry, faith for others, equipping/forming them in faith and ministry
- Connecting narratives of Bible, community, world
- Creating spaces of theological interpretation on God’s movement in world and ordinary life
INTERPRETIVE LEADERSHIP

“We tend to forget, in this day of bureaucratic organization and non-directive therapy, that the first duty of a Christian leader is to provide a Christian perspective, an interpretive framework for people who want to live faithful lives.”

—Scott Cormode, Making Spiritual Sense
FORMING THE QUESTIONS

“The role of leaders is not to be better role models or to drive change; their role is to create the structures and experiences that bring citizens together to identify and solve their own issues…. This begins by realizing that the questions are important, more important than the answers.”

—Peter Block, Community: The Structure of Belonging (Barrett-Koehler, 2009)
LEADERSHIP AS CULTIVATION

“Rather than the leader having plans and strategies that the congregation will affirm and follow, cultivation describes the leader as the one who works the soil of the congregation so as to invite and constitute the environment for the people of God to discern what the Spirit is doing in, with, and among them as a community.”

THE LEARNING LEADER

- From professional expert provider of religious goods and services…
- …to curator of community of practice and discovery
- Embracing what we don’t know
- Leading community in discerning/interpreting its identity and calling
DOING GOOD
WHAT ABOUT GOD?

- Developing theological imagination
- Cultivating spiritual practices
- Experiential learning
- Deepening identity
- Asking questions
PRACTICES: DWELLING IN THE WORD

“Where was your imagination caught?”
PRACTICES: DWELLING IN THE WORLD

- Think back to a time during the past week when you had an opportunity to share the peace.
- What was God doing there? What might God like to do?
TRANSLATING TRADITION

- Vernacular principle at heart of Anglicanism
- Worship in language of people
‘PLUNGING’

- Forming community with neighbors on their turf
- Striking up relationships
- Learning how to be in ministry with new populations, generations
- Going two by two
LEARNING FROM NEIGHBORS

- Experiments in listening
- Being taught how to be in ministry from ‘people of peace’ in neighborhood
- Utilizing relational networks
LEAN STARTUPS

- Rather than launching big program/product/initiative, hoping finds audience, creating ‘minimally viable product’ and testing with audience
- Ongoing listening loops
- Points of inflection—learning from neighbors which direction to take
EXPLORING ASSUMPTIONS

- “The key to dealing with complexity is to focus on having good conversations about assumptions.”
  —Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble, *The Other Side of Innovation*

- Example: reaching unchurched through worship?

- Reordering congregational life around innovation, while providing enough stability that people will risk learning
RISK AND EXPERIMENTATION

- Legitimizing failure in name of innovation
- ‘Good’ mistakes and ‘bad’ mistakes
SPIRIT-LED LEARNING

- God goes with us, before us, behind us
- Disciple=learner, student, apprentice
- Following energy of Spirit
- Ongoing discernment
DISCUSSION