

JOURNEYS

Spiritual Formation Quarterly

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FORT WORTH
WINTER 2016-2017

Discipline of Celebration



*"Fill us full every morning with your faithful love so we can
rejoice and celebrate our whole life long." Psalm 90:14*



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as a tool to encourage spiritual growth.

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JOURNEYS

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Discipline of Celebration



“Celebration” by Kool & The Gang was my favorite song in sixth grade. I loved it so much that my parents bought me the 45 single for my birthday. It was easy for me as a child to find reasons to laugh, sing and dance, and celebrate. Now in my 40s I struggle some days to live joyfully. Yet “celebration is at the heart of the way of Christ,” according to author and Christian theologian Richard J. Foster.

For Foster, the incarnation begins and ends with the gift of joy. The angel announcing the birth of Christ describes the news as “wonderful, joyous.” In the Gospel of John, Jesus says to his disciples before he leaves them, “I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be

complete.”

We can enter into this holy joy by remembering God’s faithfulness and goodness. We remember when we read of God hearing his people’s cries and delivering them. We do this when the preacher speaks of God’s steadfast love for his people and we remember when we share the Gospel with others.

Then there are our own stories of God’s faithfulness - some small and others big. Back in 2007, my husband and I were trying to have another baby. After taking months to get pregnant, I suffered a miscarriage. Soon after, I was overjoyed that we were pregnant again. At 12 weeks I went in for a routine

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PRACTICE

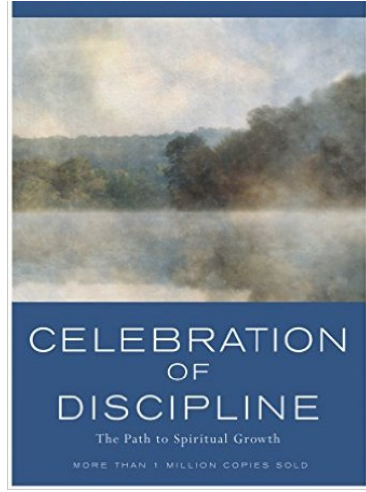
Here are some ways to practice the discipline of celebration.

BOOKS TO READ

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth

Richard J. Foster
Harper Collins, 2009

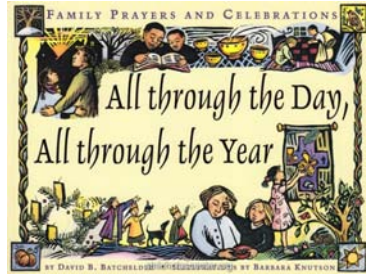
This book is hailed by many as the best modern book on Christian spirituality. Foster explores the “classic disciplines,” or central spiritual practices, of the Christian faith to show how each of these areas contribute to a balanced spiritual life.



All Through the Day, All Through the Year: Family Prayers and Celebrations

David Batchelder
Augsburg Fortress, 2000

This book offers families a framework of prayer- and tradition-building ideas to give order, joy, and meaning to their days and years, as well as helping them create a rich spiritual legacy. The book is filled with illustrated suggestions, rituals, patterns, and prayers for observing special times during the day and year: mealtimes, bedtime, birthdays, church-year seasons, holidays, and other occasions for celebration.



PRACTICE

CHRISTMAS CARDS AS PRAYER REMINDERS

This December, friends and families can use Christmas cards to celebrate loving relationships. As Christmas cards arrive, families can place them in a basket or display them in the home. As part of mealtime or evening prayers, families can take one card and pray for the card's sender. Friends, neighbors, or co-workers may choose to gather each week in December, share with one another the Christmas cards they have received, and pray for their loved ones. Groups could choose to send a note or email letting the people know that they were prayed for.

EPIPHANY CELEBRATION

During Epiphany, the church remembers the coming of the wise men bringing gifts to visit the Christ child, who by so



doing “reveal” Jesus to the world as Lord and King.

Celebrate Epiphany with a “royal” feast of favorite foods and decorations fit for three kings. Remembering Jesus as our light, use only candles for your light source. The candlelight will help create a sense of wonder and awe for this celebration.

Families and individuals also can mark the lintel above doorways with symbols of blessing. Mark the front door with these symbols: the year, the initials of traditional names for the three Magi – Casper, Melchior, and Balthasar – and four crosses. Order the symbols in the following way 20 + C + M + B + 17. This marking serves as a blessing over the entire household. The marking can be made simply with chalk or as creative as individuals would like.

AT FPC...



Something to Try: Walking the Labyrinth and the Spiritual Discipline of Celebration

In one of this edition's featured books, *Celebration of Disciplines*, Richard Foster reminds us that spiritual disciplines provide the opportunity to move from life's surface to its interior depths and that discipline requires practice. You are invited to practice the spiritual discipline of celebration on FPC's outdoor labyrinth.

FPC's Outdoor Labyrinth is available at the northwest corner of the campus, adjacent to the Columbarium. A convenient outside entrance faces Trinity Terrace. All are free to use the recently constructed labyrinth to help enrich their prayer life. Just come in and experience the richness of labyrinth-guided meditation/prayer.

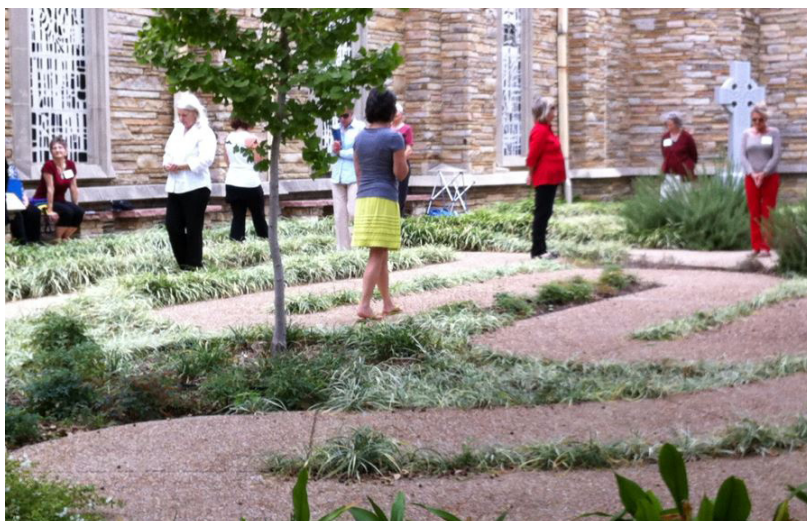
An Advent Labyrinth Walk will be offered Sunday, December 4 at 5 p.m. at FPC's outdoor labyrinth (see above). During this walk, you become a pilgrim journeying to center as the light fades to darkness. Then, we await together the advent of the Light of the World.

Don't Know How to Use a Labyrinth?

Here are some tips for getting started...

1. Before entering the labyrinth, read Psalm 136, a wonderful song of celebration for God's love and provision in good times and bad.
2. As you pause at the threshold, do one (or both) of the following:
 - a. Pray for a gentle reminder of challenges God has enabled you to meet in which you can rejoice and give thanks;
 - b. Pray for openness to God's whisper, reminding you of your life's miracles, small or large, to celebrate today.
3. As you leave the labyrinth, you are invited to pray as you may feel led to do so.
4. Consider making a note of any thoughts or insights you want to take with you as you return to activities of your daily life.

RETREATS



Alive With Possibility: New Stories for a New Year

Thursday, December 29, 2016 – Sunday, January 1, 2017

Ghost Ranch, HC77 Box 11, Abiquiu, NM 87510

By creating and expressing new stories and new characters for themselves, participants will have the opportunity to celebrate, embody and explore living into new, dynamic and animated possibilities in the New Year. Possibilities will become known in their bodies and souls through the use of tools such as writing, art, myth-making, and movement. (Workshop ID: G17S113X) For more, visit <https://www.ghost ranch.org/retreat/alive-possibility-new-stories-new-year-g17s113x/#sthash.0WzQaWjb.dpuf>

Movement and the Enneagram: Triads Intensive, with Wings, Stress and Security

Friday, February 17 – Sunday, February 19, 2017

The Micah Center, 9027 Midway Road, Dallas, TX 75209

Celebrate the joy of personal discovery in the New Year. The Enneagram refers to three Triads (Thinking, Feeling, and Doing) to teach us

RETREATS

how we respond to the world, why we respond the way we do, and how it affects our relationships with others. For more information on this workshop, go to: <https://lifeinthetrinityministry.com>.

5th Annual SoulCollage® Retreat: Dancing with our Companions

(offering by Seton Cove, Austin, Texas)

Friday, February 24- Sunday, February 26, 2017

Red Corral Ranch near Wimberley, TX

A celebration of living, this retreat offers a joy-filled weekend of dance, music, art, journaling, loving community, and solitude in a tranquil Texas hill country setting. This retreat will focus on Chakradance™, a “movement practice for the soul,” that uses free-flowing movements (safe for all body types and fitness levels) to help free energy in the body and open participants to a deeper experience of life. For more, visit http://www.setoncove.net/programs/classes/5th_annual_soulcollage_retreat_dancing_with_our_companions.

Eat, Pray, Click

Wednesday, April 19 - Sunday, April 23, 2017

Casa del Sol, Ghost Ranch, HC77 Box 11, Abiquiu, NM 87510

This retreat brings people together to relax, celebrate the gift of home-cooked meals, pray the morning and evening liturgies of Casa del Sol, take pictures in the land of Georgia O’Keeffe, and explore this secluded part of the ranch, as well as some neighboring spiritual and artistic places. For more information (Workshop ID: G17CDS441), visit <https://www.ghost ranch.org/retreat/eat-pray-click-g17c ds441/#sthash.maKatck5.dpuf>

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

For a complete list of ways to celebrate
Advent at First Presbyterian Church,
please visit FPCFW.ORG

ultrasound. My doctor couldn't find a heartbeat. I had suffered my second miscarriage. My heart was broken. I recall one day standing under the shower letting the water fall over me and crying. In that still moment I felt God's powerful love. God was there with me in my pain. I still cried, but mixed in were tears of joy and love. This year, my husband and I celebrate our daughter Rachel's 14th birthday and Megan's 7th.

Because we know that God is good and loves us, we can lay at his feet all of our cares. Foster writes that "freedom from anxiety and care forms the basis for celebration." You can't celebrate when you are weighed down with worry. For many, these are anxious times. So we must remind each other that our God is Sovereign, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. "Don't fear, because I am with you; don't be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Foster shares practical ways to celebrate with others. We can sing, dance, and even shout. I'm reminded of Psalm 100: "Shout triumphantly to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with celebration! Come before him with

shouts of joy!" In worship this Advent season, let us sing the hymns deeper and with more passion, and read the corporate prayers with spiritual boldness.

Foster also suggests turning family events into times of celebration and thanksgiving. While traditional rites of passages, such as marriages and birthdays, are the perfect time for joyful celebrations, we can also recognize other important events, like first tooth loss, college acceptance letters, and a good health report. We also can honor our relationships by forming a regular ritual of celebration. Set up a routine time to go for a walk, play a round of golf, pray together, or cook a new dish.

Foster points out that we can celebrate holidays like Christmas and New Year's in meaningful rather than commercial ways. As I prepare for this year's holiday celebrations, I will try and reflect on whether the celebration is life-giving and soul-making. Does the celebration build love and gratitude within me and others?

I look forward to celebrating this Advent and Christmas season with our church family. Together may we pray to God: "Fill us full every morning with your faithful love so we can rejoice and celebrate our whole life long." (Psalm 90:14). ■

WHERE TO GO



Fort Worth Botanic Gardens & Japanese Garden

Botanic Garden: 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd., Fort Worth, TX 76107

Japanese Garden: 3300 Japanese Garden Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76107

817.392.5510 www.fwb.org

The Japanese Garden in the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, which offers seven acres of serpentine paths, lush vegetation, and Imperial Carp (Koi) pond, is perfect for relaxation and contemplation.

Mo-Ranch (Presbyterian Mo-Ranch Assembly)

2229 FM 1340, Hunt, Texas 78024-3037

800.460.4401 www.moranch.org/Meet-Stay-Dine

Mo-Ranch, located on the Guadalupe River in the Texas Hill Country, offers retreats, a ropes course, riverfront swimming, rapids, a swimming pool, and much more. You can also just visit Mo-Ranch for the day, to swim, picnic, or relax.

The Monastery of Christ in the Desert (Benedictine)

Abiquiu, New Mexico

www.christdesert.org

Situated in a beautiful canyon in northwestern New Mexico, the monastery is surrounded by wilderness. It offers some retreats, but also maintains a guesthouse for private retreats where individuals can share communal prayer times with the monks.

A GIFT FOR YOU...

In each issue of *Journeys*, the back cover will include a visual of a scripture or an encouraging quote as our gift to you. Cut it out and post somewhere you'll see it often.

-- *The Spiritual Formation Subcommittee*

THE LORD
has done
GREAT THINGS
for us and we are filled with
JOY

PSALM 126:3