

a devotional booklet to accompany the workshop

In order to address the challenges faced by our congregations, we need to develop a willingness to take drastic measures, have faith strong enough to attempt the impossible and make bold decisions. There are many fears that prevent us from allowing God to work through our efforts, so we turn to scripture to find hope and the promise of resurrection. Many of the passages included in this booklet have been used for thousands of years as affirmations for individuals to persevere through the challenges of their own personal lives. What would happen if we applied these same promises to our congregations?

These devotions can be used in several ways:

- For individual study
- As opening devotions or discussion topics for session and committee meetings
- As homework assignments for session and committee members between meetings
- As inserts for worship bulletins
- As discussion topics during coffee hours and other congregational gatherings
- As part of a congregational discernment process

This booklet is yours to use as you see fit. May God lead you to faithful expressions of scriptural teachings.

BRIDGING THE GAP
A WORKSHOP TO SHIFT OUT OF A SCARCITY
MINDSET TOWARD FUTURE CONSCIOUSNESS

NO YOUNG
PEOPLE IN
YOUR
CHURCH?

MONEY
RUNNING
OUT?

NOT SURE
WHAT TO DO
NEXT?

JOIN US!

9am-4pm [Click here to RSVP for lunch](#)
Workshop repeats in these locations:

Trumansburg - Saturday, October 14th
Newark - Wednesday, October 25th
Hornell - Friday, October 27th
Corning - Monday, October 30th

This booklet has been developed as part of a research project for Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry *Risking Faithfully: Disruption as Revelation as Resurrection* program. In October of 2021, the cohort members developed the following definition for these studies:

Faithful risk-taking is...

Love:

alive & aware

embodied & Spirit-led

hopeful & vulnerable

terrifying & essential

It is my hope that you will join me on this exploration of what 'faithful risk-taking' means for you and your congregation as we discern the adventurous futures that God has placed before us.

Begin by describing the current situation of the community where your church is located. Consider things like: Where do people work? How much is rent or the cost of a house? How big is the local school system? Where do people buy groceries? Are there doctors nearby? What draws people into the neighborhood? Etc.

Describe the situation at your church. Consider membership, financial circumstances, mission activities, outreach efforts, etc.

If your church has a mission statement, please include it here:

How do you feel about the future of your congregation? Are you hopeful, sad, optimistic, uncertain, etc.? Please explain:

When was this statement established? Does it fit the current situation of your church and community? Why or why not? Please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow...” Matthew 6:33-34

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.” Psalm 125:1 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...” Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Is 41:10 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.” Isaiah 41:13 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated...” Isaiah 54:4 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to 'let go' of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you'd like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” John 12:24 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“This, too, I carefully explored: Even though the actions of godly and wise people are in God’s hands, no one knows whether God will show them favor.” Ecclesiastes 9:1 (NLT)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

And God spoke all these words: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:1-3

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit. Everyone comes naked from their mother’s womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands.” Ecclesiastes 5:13-15 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to ‘let go’ of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you’d like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

**“How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”
1 Corinthians 15:35-58**

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.” Ecclesiastes 11:4 (NLT)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” Luke 14:33 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

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As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to 'let go' of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you'd like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:12-13 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” Psalm 23:1 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“For we live by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“You are my friends if you do what I command.” John 15:14 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” John 15:16 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to ‘let go’ of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you’d like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“This is my command: Love each other.” John 15:17 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.” Psalm 46:5 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.”
Titus 2:7-8 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“I am making everything new!” Revelation 21:5 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

**“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.”
Hebrews 8:8 (NIV)**

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.” Isaiah 48:17 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to 'let go' of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you'd like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." Psalm 51:12 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

"The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." Genesis 12:1 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.” Genesis 12:4 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” Luke 9:5 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to ‘let go’ of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you’d like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“... do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Matthew 10:19-20 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42, 47 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.” Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.” Acts 16:5 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to ‘let go’ of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you’d like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don’t have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless—like chasing the wind.” Ecclesiastes 6:9 (NLT)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“... your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to ‘let go’ of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you’d like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” 1 Corinthians 3:7 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Matthew 16:18

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.” Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

Then the LORD said to Job, “Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God’s critic, but do you have the answers?” Job 40:1-2 (NLT)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.” Job 42:10 (NLT)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.” 1 Peter 1:23-25 (NIV)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to 'let go' of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you'd like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

"That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty." Ecclesiastes 12:13 (NLT)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Additional Selections from the PC(USA) Book of Order

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. (F-1.0202)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. (F-1.0301)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life. (F-1.0301)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. (F-1.0301)

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Consider the situation at your church as you read the following passage:

“Faithful risk-taking is... Love: Alive and aware, embodied and Spirit-led, hopeful and vulnerable, terrifying and essential.” DMin Cohort definition

If this passage causes something to surface for you regarding the situation at your church, please explain:

Check-in

As a result of these exercises, do you feel more prepared to ‘let go’ of any aspects of the situation at your church? If yes, please explain:

As a result of these exercises, are there any new endeavors you’d like to pursue with your church? If yes, please explain:

As mentioned earlier, this booklet has been developed as part of a research project for Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry *Risking Faithfully: Disruption as Revelation as Resurrection* program. This particular research project explores how to help churches consider future possibilities. **If you would like to participate in this research, please respond to the following questions in an email addressed to marjorieackerman1@gmail.com by Friday, December 15, 2023.** By emailing your responses, you are giving permission to use them in the final research paper that will be available to anyone with access to the library at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

1. Did you attend any of the *Bridging the Gap* workshops?

Yes No

2. How did you use these exercises? *Mark all that apply:*

- a) For individual study
- b) As opening devotions or discussion topics for session and committee meetings
- c) As homework assignments for session and committee members between meetings
- d) As inserts for worship bulletins
- e) As discussion topics during coffee hours and other congregational gatherings
- f) As part of a congregational discernment process

Please explain:

3. As a result of these exercises, I feel:

- a) More open/able to exploring possible future directions for my church
- b) Less open/able to exploring possible future directions for my church
- c) About the same level of openness/ability to exploring possible future directions for my church as I felt before doing these exercises

Please explain your response:

4. Please share any additional thoughts/ideas/etc. regarding the impact of this resource: