Theological Reflections
often referred to as TRs

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Schedule

• After tonight we will meet on the following nights
  – March 7th, 14th, 21st the 28th will be a presentation on the Mission trip to Cambodia by members of FUMC and our own Norm Weber
  
  – We will start as soon as possible after eating and a little clean-up.
  
  – After 50 minutes we will start wrap-up and do all we can to stop at 60 minutes.
Topics by Week

- Tonight will be our introduction
- March 7\textsuperscript{th} we will cover in detail the 4 part TR process and an example of a TR
- March 14\textsuperscript{th} we will do our First TR
- March 21 we will do our second TR and wrap up with questions and comments
Opening Worship

• We always begin our Theological Reflection with worship.
• It can be a prayer from the BCP or one written by the person assigned worship for that meeting. We rotate Worship each time we meet.
• Sometimes we start with an opening statement then everyone else adds something.
The Lord be With You

- Lord Christ, we ask that you join us tonight, help us to open our hearts, minds and souls to what we will hear and share tonight. We ask this in your Holy Name.
- Amen.
Introduction to TR’s

• What is a Theological Reflection?
• How is it done?
• Roles in Theological Reflections
  • Mentor  Co Mentor
  • Worship leader
  • TR topic selection
• Scribe
• Methods and topics
Theology

• What is Theology?
Theology = God Talk

• 'theos' which means 'God', and 'logos' which means 'word'

• talk about God, and relationships between God, ourselves and the world
Reflection

Experiencing something - it can be any event in life no matter how small Identifying that experience –

Subconsciously or intentionally describing the event

Analyzing that experience - the actual reflection on the event

Generalizing from that experience and analysis - determining our future action
What is a Theological Reflection?

Theological reflection occurs at the juncture of our personal experience and the world we encounter. Both are enveloped by the divine environment which we encounter in liturgy and spiritual points of our lives. Reflection occurs when we stand in the juncture of our Culture, Sinfulness, Judgment and Redemption.
It is done in community

- There are no 'lone' Christians
  - We listen for God in community
  - We do theology in community, reflecting on our tradition and contemporary issues
  - We discern the call to ministry in community
  - We worship in community
• When we discuss theology or the church, even down to the small stuff, there's a whole crowd of invisible people in the room; Plato and Aristotle, who framed the Western thought process, and whose ideas shape the TRs (Plato and his forms lie behind the use of metaphor, Aristotle and his stress on realism that lie behind the four quadrants); Thomas Aquinas, who established that intellectual inquiry is a form of religious experience; Bonaventure, who came up with the idea of multiple truths, thus allowing both scientific and intellectual inquiry...
Other things to consider

- The first is that the presenter must realize that they are not a teacher, and do not have ownership of the process; the conversation has to be free to move in the direction the Spirit drives it.
Second, it has to follow form. If you listen to it, the TR form actually follows the course of a conversation; it just avoids two pitfalls—reiteration and ideological conflict. Also, left to ourselves, we tend to reason in circles, and often end up merely confirming what we already believe; systematic theological inquiry, like the TR, tends to mitigate that effect.
• Third, it has to have people who are willing to participate in an honest and open manner.

• Fourth, a good subject.

• Fifth, a practical application. It has to be more than a theoretical discussion; it has to have some effect on the way that we perceive and act.
Roles in Theological Reflections

• Mentor  Co Mentor

• Worship leader

• TR topic selection

• Scribe
Methods

• There are several “methods”; we are going to cover just two in this presentation.
Discussion with Metaphor

• Discussion on scripture, prayer, lyrics in a hymn, a secular song, story in the news or a photo.

• We will often develop a metaphor for it.
1. What is life like in this metaphor? What kind of a world does it describe? **Creation**

2. What separates or alienates? What is destructive? What causes stress and tension? **Sin**

3. What gets attention, surprises, shocks, or sheds new light? **Judgment**

4a. What signifies a change of heart, mind or action? **Repentance** &

4b. What brings reconciliation, unity, new life, and cause for celebration? **Redemption**
Issue, conflict or Paradox

• The method begins with a life incident of a group member, but is more analytical. From the life incident, it derives an “issue” statement -- a statement that balances two contrasting options. An example of an issue statement might be: I love to travel for my job and I love to be at home with my family.

• An issue statement involves tension, because the two phrases pull in different directions. The statement should deal with what we actually feel, not with moral stands or how we think we should feel. The two sides of the issue revealed in the incident are examined for their Costs and their Promises (that is the good and bad side of both aspects) by the group. Move it to general instead of specific as soon as you can, not personal.
Four Sources

1. **Creation or Culture**: What is this world like?
   - What is it like to live there?
   - What is most attractive or ugly?

2. **Sin**: What diminishes this world?
   - What is sinful or wrong in this world?
   - What counts as negative in this world?
Four Sources

• 3. **Judgment**: What reveals new learning?
• What sheds new light?
• What calls us up short in this world?
• How does this convict you and cause you to change your actions?

• 4. **Repentance/Redemption**: What restores this world?
• What brings about healing?
• What brings healing and redemption in this world? (Redemption)
Identify insights and look for implications for action.

• A. What have you learned?
• B. What are you called to do?
• C. Who will support you or what will you need to fulfill your intentions?
• D. What are the implications for others and for the future?
Lets take a peek at some topics

• These are topics used in my EFM group over the past year and a half.

• After we look at them we will each vote for one that got our interest.
• “Jesus Wept”

• two choices, "will not come if you watch for it" and "the kingdom of God is within you"

• "We the willing, led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful. We have done so much, with so little, for so long, we are now qualified to do anything with nothing." -- Teresa Calcutta