Interacting with God’s Story and Vision

A. Covenants then and now
Use concordances and Bibles to find references to covenant. Note the two parties involved, the promises made, and the symbols that represent the vow. Discuss the sacred vows we make today in our church community, for example, at a parent-child dedication, baptism, or communion.

» What symbols represent these covenants with God?
Check your hymnals for the covenantal prayers and songs used with these rituals.

» How seriously do we take our part of the covenant?
» Do you think there should be opportunities to re-evaluate and/or renew these covenants? If so, how do we go about it?

B. Covenant and communion
Distribute pencils and paper. Invite the group to create acrostics using the words covenant and communion. Work in pairs or small groups, and then share with the larger group.

C. Communion then and now
Note Darling’s opening story about communion being a multisensory experience (ABS, p. 2).

» How are your senses activated during communion?
» Think about the communion practices and meanings you have experienced. How have they changed over the years?
» What would make this covenantal meal more meaningful to you?

Brainstorm ways all your senses can be employed during this sacred feast.

D. Being/Becoming God’s people
The ancient covenant, quoted from the prophet Jeremiah, reminds us that God is a relational God. Jesus’ life and ministry put flesh on that relationship. Review the promises God made in Hebrews 8:10-12: God’s laws are imprinted in our minds and hearts; we belong to God; we can “know” God, i.e., have a personal relationship with God; and God forgives and forgets our sins.

» In our worship services, how are we being reminded of these promises?
» Are we experiencing God’s love (emotion) as well as knowing about God (intellect)?
» How does this happen?

Try this exercise to help you articulate the meaning of covenant for folks today. Form pairs with one person playing the role of the “speaker,” namely a seasoned Christian, and the other in the role of “the seeker,” a person with no faith or church background, but who is interested in Christianity. The speaker explains in her/his own words what covenant means. The seeker is free to ask any questions to help understand the concept.

Debrief the “speaker.”

» Were you able to express yourself clearly?
» What challenges did you face?

Debrief the “seeker.”

» Did you understand what you heard?
» Were you convinced? What challenges did you face?

If time allows, switch roles and repeat the exercise.

Discuss:

» What can we do to spread God’s good news: God’s desire for everyone to have an intimate loving relationship with God, collectively and individually?