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Three themes for our context

1. Faithful Christian community
   » How does our congregation measure up to Colossians’ standards?
   » Is this description relevant for our times?
   » What would you add or discard?

2. Heresy
   » What threats to Christian faithfulness does our congregation face?
   
   What heresies or deceptive philosophies might Paul caution us about?

   Which ones do you think are the most dangerous? Explain.

3. The new covenant
   » How can a reminder or renewal of our baptismal vows strengthen our faith?

   » What language do we use to describe the meaning of baptism from an Anabaptist perspective?
Interacting with God’s Story and Vision

A. Three themes for our context
Form groups again. Refer to the notes above, adding to them. Invite the groups to report and discuss their findings.

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   » What language do we use to describe the meaning of baptism from an Anabaptist perspective?

B. Living out our baptisms
Share what the experience of baptism means to you now.

   » What is the role and responsibility of the congregation when someone is baptized?

Research your hymnal for songs and prayers about baptism.

   » With which songs do you resonate?
   » What language of baptism challenges your belief system?

C. Competing voices
Refer to Darling’s notes about trust (ABS, p. 24, #1). Name some philosophies or types of spirituality that you have concerns about. For example, some people are wary of earth-friendly, native, or Celtic spiritualities; others protest theologies that support the status quo both politically and economically. Some fear the influence of mysticism or paganism (see ABS, p. 25, #2).

   » How does/can your congregation address such issues?
   » How do we discern what is a heresy or false teaching and when the Holy Spirit is nudging us to think in new ways?

Remember, Jesus initiated a new way of relating to God. And early Anabaptists were called heretics because they challenged the traditional belief system.

   » How does our spiritual legacy inform how we discern God’s future?

D. Essentials of faith
Darling writes about religious rules versus freedom in Christ (ABS, p. 25). Reflect on the rules that have changed over the years.

   » How do you feel about this?
   » Which for you is a more important faith stance—grace or judgment? Explain.

Individually, write a personal code of conduct that can guide your daily living. Or, as a group, determine the essentials of faith for your congregation. Brainstorm and jot down on newsprint about ten beliefs or practices that you believe are non-negotiable for Christians. Then distribute stickers and have folks mark the five (or fewer) beliefs that are most important to them.

   » What do you notice about the results?
   » What practices or ideas can you relinquish or revise?
   » What holds your congregation together in love when there are theological differences?

E. Create a poster
Illustrate your interpretation of one or more phrases from the text that describe a faithful church: “encouraged in heart,” “united in love,” “rooted and built up,” “overflowing with thankfulness.” Use art to bring these phrases alive for our context today. Or use your bodies to express these phrases.