



ReConnecting

**A Wesleyan Guide for the Renewal of Our
Congregation**

Leader's Guide

Rob Weber

RECONNECTING: A WESLEYAN GUIDE FOR THE RENEWAL OF OUR CONGREGATION
LEADER'S GUIDE

Copyright © 2002 Rob Weber

All rights reserved.

Permission is granted to copy this *Leader's Guide* for use by multiple small group leaders at a single congregation. Permission to copy and distribute the Leader Helps, including the PowerPoint® slides, the Poster and the Brochure is granted.

Permission to copy *ReConnecting: Participant's Guide and Daily Journal* is expressly denied and is a violation of the US Copyright Acts of 1976 and 1998. Permission to copy the *ReConnecting* DVD is expressly denied. Unauthorized duplication of the *ReConnecting DVD* is a federal offense, and violators will be prosecuted.

Participant's Guide and Daily Journal: ISBN 0-687-06535-6
Leader's Guide with DVD: ISBN 0-687-02234-2

Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
WHAT ARE THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE DVD?	4
HOW DO I ACCESS THESE RESOURCES?	5
PLAYING THE DVD ON A SET-TOP PLAYER	5
USING THE DVD ON A COMPUTER	6
GETTING STARTED	7
SESSION ONE: WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE WE?	8
SESSION TWO: COMING HOME	9
SESSION TWO: COMING HOME	10
SESSION THREE: GOING DEEP	12
SESSION FOUR: OUTSIDE THE GATES	14
SESSION FIVE: CLEAR EXPECTATIONS	15
SESSION FIVE: CLEAR EXPECTATIONS	16
SESSION SIX: THE EMERGING CHURCH	17
SESSION SEVEN: LET'S ROLL	18
APPENDIX ONE: GROUP MODELS FOR USING <i>RECONNECTING</i>	19
APPENDIX TWO: SHARED EXCITEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING	21
IMPLEMENTING A CONGREGATION-WIDE EMPHASIS ON <i>RECONNECTING</i>	21
A SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR PREPARATION	22
DEVELOP A "DREAM TEAM"	23
RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING A LONG-RANGE PLAN	23
<i>VISUAL LEADERSHIP: THE CHURCH LEADER AS IMAGE SMITH</i>	23
GO ON A HOLY ROAD TRIP	24
PLAN AND LAUNCH ONGOING SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND STUDY GROUPS	24

Leader's Guide—Introduction

You found and copied this Leader's Guide as an Adobe® Acrobat® PDF document in the graphics folder on the DVD drive in your computer. Before you begin reading, please take a look at the video **Overview** on the DVD, which briefly introduces the *ReConnecting* program. The video overview can also be used for promotional purposes when organizing a ReConnecting experience in your congregation. (You might, for example, show the video on a Sunday morning during worship). Next, read through the introductory pages of the Participant's Guide to get a feel for what is expected of each person. You may want to skim through the Participant's Guide to glimpse the nature of the readings and the journaling. The Leader's Guide will help you to understand the flow of each session and what is required for preparation before each class.

Thank you for becoming a part of this movement. I pray for you and for all of the churches involved in this project that God will fully renew the potential in our common ministry. God can do mighty things through you and your congregation.

In addition to this Leader's Guide that you found in the graphics folder on the DVD, you will also find the following customizable Leader's Helps:

1. A *ReConnecting* poster that can be printed on a color printer or customized in a graphics program. You will be able to add information about location, dates, and times for the sessions. This poster has been included in two different formats—Adobe® Acrobat® PDF and TIFF. You will need to have Adobe® Acrobat® Reader installed on your computer in order to open the PDF version. (This program has been included on the DVD and can be found in the **Leader's Guide** folder.) The TIFF version can be opened in a graphics program such as Adobe® Photoshop or Jasc™ PaintShop Pro™.
2. A slide show that can be customized in Microsoft PowerPoint® by the group leader for each session. The slide show includes the discussion questions used for each session, which can be displayed from your DVD player.
3. A six-panel *ReConnecting* brochure that can be customized, printed, and mailed (or placed in a bulletin).
4. Two sample letters and a registration card for introducing the program to your congregation.

What Are the Additional Resources on the DVD?

The following is a list of the folders included on the DVD and a brief description of the files contained in each:

Leader's Guide

The *Leader's Guide* is included on the DVD as a PDF file (**Leaders Guide.pdf**). To open this file, you will need to have Adobe® Acrobat® Reader installed on your computer. (See page 14 for instructions about installing Acrobat Reader.) The *Leader's Guide* contains step-by-step instructions for leading each of the seven sessions, as well as ideas for ways to plan and implement the *ReConnecting* experience in your particular setting. You may make copies of the guide for multiple leaders.

Publicity

Materials have been included to help you publicize the *ReConnecting* experience for your congregation. Several different sizes and formats of a *ReConnecting* poster can be found on the DVD. Display these posters

throughout your church to advertise when and where you will be offering the program. We have given you both an 8.5 x 11 size and a 11 x 17 size, in both PDF and TIFF format. If you have Acrobat[®] Reader, you can open a PDF version, print it out, and use a marker to fill in date, time, and location information on the bottom portion. Or you can open one of the TIFF files in a graphics program like Adobe[®] Photoshop or Photoshop Elements and type in this information. You will be able to print out the 8.5 x 11 version on a high quality color printer, or you can take the larger size to your local printshop for a print out.

Examples of a brochure, letters, and a registration card have also been included to help you inform your congregation about this exciting program. These files have been included as Microsoft Word documents and can be easily customized for your church.

(Files included are: **Poster.pdf**, **poster large.tif**, **poster small.tif**, **brochure.doc**, **registration.doc**, **letter1.doc**, **letter2.doc**)

PowerPoint[®] Slideshows

Each session includes a short slide show to help guide your group time. These slides are included as part of the DVD interface—and can be played directly from the session sub-menu—and also as PowerPoint files. If your church has the ability to connect a computer to a projector, you might prefer to copy the PowerPoint file to your hard drive and customize it for your particular setting. You would then be able to show it from PowerPoint just as you do with other presentations. (Files included: **Session1.ppt** through **Session7.ppt**.)

Acrobat Reader

The installation program for Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.05 has been included on the DVD so that you may easily install this program on your computer if you do not have it or if you have an older version that will not open the PDF files included. . To install the reader, simply double-click the appropriate file for your computer platform and follow the onscreen instructions (ar505enu.exe for Windows; ar505.bin for Macintosh.)

How Do I Access These Resources?

To access the Leader's Guide and additional materials on the DVD, you will need to put the DVD into a computer DVD-ROM drive. To browse to these data folders in Windows, open Windows Explorer and find the ReConnecting disk icon. Double-click the DVD icon for a listing of the contents. (Be patient; it may take several seconds for the list to appear.) You may also use My Computer to get a listing of the data. However, you will probably need to right-click the DVD icon and choose Explore rather than double-clicking since this might cause the DVD to begin playing. On a Macintosh, simply double-click the ReConnecting DVD icon to view the contents of the disk.

Once you have located the file you need, either copy the file to your hard drive or double-click the file to open it from the disk. If you open the file from the disk, remember that manipulating the file will be slower.

Playing the DVD on a Set-top Player

Set-top DVD players are connected to a TV. If you have played a DVD motion picture previously, you will see that the *ReConnecting* DVD behaves in the same way. Once inserted, the disk will begin playing automatically and will first bring up the copyright screen, followed by the main menu. To navigate through the DVD menus, use the up and down arrow keys on your remote to move the pointer to the menu item

that you wish to play. After an item is highlighted, press **Play** to move to the next screen, advance a slide, or to begin playing an item, such as a video, music, or a presentation slide show. Clicking the **Title** button will take you to back to the very beginning of the disk.

Volume is also adjusted in the normal way for your DVD player. Other buttons on the remote, like **Fast Forward**, will allow you to quickly move through a video or jump to the next item on the screen.

Each slideshow also contains the music for that session and will automatically begin playing the music once you reach the slide with the music credits on it. Sessions 4, 6, and 7 also include the lyrics to the song and the slides will automatically advance with the music. To stop the music and return to the menu, simply highlight the **Play Centering Music** button again and click **Play**.

This particular DVD contains content on both sides. Sessions One through Three are located on Side 1 and Sessions Four through Seven are located on Side 2. If you try to access one of the sessions from the session menu that is not located on the current side, a screen will appear that instructs you to eject the DVD from the player, turn it over, and begin playing again.

Many of the screens have embedded graphical buttons, such as **Menu** to help you navigate the items on the DVD. Selecting the **Menu** button will take you back one level in the menu structure, depending on where you are. For example, if you have the menu for Session One onscreen, selecting **Menu** will take you back to the main session menu (lists all seven sessions). Selecting the **Back** or **Next** button will move you through the menus at the same level, the individual session menus.

Using the DVD on a Computer

If you have the capability to hook a computer with a DVD player to a projector, you may choose to use this method to display the video and music components for the sessions. Every computer will have a different type of proprietary software that comes with the DVD drive, and the controls on each will vary slightly. Many of the buttons on the software interface will act just like the buttons on a DVD remote, though there will be some variation. Using the up and down arrow buttons on your graphical software remote will cycle through highlighting each of the buttons, functioning just as they do on a set-top DVD player. (**Up** and **Left** will move through the buttons clockwise; **Down** and **Right** = counter-clockwise.) Once you have highlighted the button you want, hit the Enter key to activate the button. The advantage, however, of the computer navigation over the DVD set-top player is your ability to use the mouse to easily select the button you want by clicking on it.

In general, clicking the **Menu** button will take you back one step: if you are simply in a menu, it will take you up one level to the previous one; if you are playing a video, it will stop the video and take you back to the Session sub-menu. You can also use the **Menu** button to exit out of a slideshow. Depending on where you are, you may have several choices when you click the **Menu** button. **Title** takes you back to the very beginning, **Root** takes you back to the previous menu (if this is your only other choice), or if you also have **Subtitle** as a choice, **Root** will take you back to the opening Main menu while **Subtitle** will take you back to the previous menu (usually the individual session menu).

Clicking the **Title** button will take you to back to the very beginning of the disk. The **Fast Forward** and **Rewind** buttons will allow to advance or rewind the video while playing. **Next** and **Previous** will only work to advance you through the slides in the slideshow.

Each slideshow also contains the music for that session and will automatically begin playing the music once you reach the slide with the music credits on it. Sessions 4, 6, and 7 also include the lyrics to the song and

the slides will automatically advance with the music. To stop the music and advance, you can simply click the Next button in Sessions 1, 2, 3, and 5 or **Menu > Root** in Sessions 4, 6, and 7.

Getting Started

The following pages provide an overview of the leader's task for each group session. The sessions are generally broken into four sections: gathering, viewing the video, discussing, and processing or reflecting.

Each member of the class needs a copy of *ReConnecting: Participant's Guide and Daily Journal* (ISBN 0-687-06535-6). Additional copies can be ordered from your local bookstore or at <http://www.cokesbury.com>.

The gathering portion of the session can be done very quickly if there is not much time allocated for your meeting, or it can be shared more slowly by allowing the participants to become comfortable, centered, and focused on the theme of the session.

For each session, you will need a DVD player and TV (large enough to be seen and heard by the entire group). A DVD player can be purchased inexpensively (around \$100), and DVD technology will soon be the standard for video. If the DVD player is in your computer, you can hook up the computer (which is equipped with speakers) to a high-lumen projector and display the DVD on a large screen. Make sure that the sound coming from the DVD is of sufficient volume for the participants or the space.

Notes on preparation

It is wise to arrive early and stay afterward to be available if someone has questions about what they are thinking or feeling.

Prior to each session, read over the Leader's Guide and watch the video session. Jot down the main ideas in the video segment.

Become familiar with how your DVD player works. If it is a set-top player, you will use a remote to select and play the components on the disk. If your DVD player is in a computer, you will use the mouse to select text, graphics, or buttons and play components directly on the screen.

You will want to make sure that the discussion questions for each session are available for the group in advance. These questions can be displayed from the PowerPoint® slide show for that session, or you may want to write the questions on a chalkboard or whiteboard for the group. If you have several groups meeting in different locations, you might also consider typing up the questions for each session and making copies to distribute during the session.

These discussion questions have been included to help guide your reflections. They are meant to serve as a "jumping off" point, and to help stimulate discussion. There are no right or wrong answers.

See [Appendix One](#) and [Appendix Two](#) for proven and tested methods for launching and implementing *ReConnecting* in a congregation

Session One: Where in the World Are We?



Before the first session, read the introductory section of the Participant’s Guide and Daily Journal, and then review the video segment to be shown during class. Locate several small stones (pocket-sized, perhaps polished), one for each participant, and as you prepare for the session, pray for each of the participants specifically. The stones will be distributed at the end of the opening session and are to be kept with each of the participants throughout the course of the seven-week series.

You may want to designate someone to set up a worship center for the meeting. If you have access to a small desktop fountain with rocks and running water, this visual and aural stimulation is an effective reinforcement of the rocks in the river of change on the video for this session.

Open with prayer.

Welcome participants. Express your excitement that they are accompanying you on this seven-week or seven-session journey.

Show video: *ReConnecting*, **Overview:** Introductory Session (on DVD main menu).

Distribute Participant Guides.

Describe what participants can expect:

1. View video each week.
2. Centering prayer and music time for reflection and meditation.

RECONNECTING

3. Discuss journaling by using introductory portion of *ReConnecting: Participant's Guide*.

Show video: *ReConnecting*, Session One.

Discussion: Ask the group the questions below. Have someone take notes on the group's responses. You may also use an overhead transparency or customize the PowerPoint® slide found in the graphics folder on the DVD. The interface for Session One on the DVD also permits full-screen display of a presentation slide at this time.

- ❖ What are the two greatest changes you've seen in the world during your lifetime?
- ❖ What do you believe is the original mission of the Church?
- ❖ When did you feel closest to God?
- ❖ How is the world different for your children/grandchildren than it was for you growing up?

Ask people to be committed for participation.

Say: This study is helpful for individual growth, but its effect will be most important for the congregation as a whole if we agree to participate together, making every effort to faithfully do the reading and journaling, as well as attending all of the sessions unless you are ill or have an emergency.

Distribute the stones to each participant. Explain how you collected these stones and prayed for your church and for each person who receives a stone. Ask them to carry the stones with them each day for the next seven weeks to constantly remind them to remember God's faithfulness and promise for this congregation and to pray for your church and the future toward which God is leading you.

Play centering music, "River God." If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Session Two: Coming Home

Open with prayer.

Discuss responses to last week's journal readings.

Ask: After spending a week by looking into the changes taking place all around us, do you think our best days are past or yet to come? Why?

Say: Turn together to Day Four of Session One. On Day Four, we read about the birth of the church in Acts and the birth of the Methodist movement in Oxford, both of which were powerful and explosive movements that emerged out of an existing religious body.

In the **Contemporary Words** section, the author wrote, “No longer was a mental agreement with, or a belief in Christianity enough. To be a Christian, one needed to be transformed into newness of life through a heart-felt relationship with the living Lord. The orientation of the Church, which had become an institution maintained by and for the establishment, became directed towards those who were disenfranchised, body and soul.”

Break into groups of three or four and discuss the questions below. Have someone take notes on the groups' responses. You may also use an overhead transparency or customize the PowerPoint® slide found in the graphics folder on the DVD. The interface for Session Two on the DVD also permits full-screen display of a presentation slide at this time.

You may wish to write out the questions on a poster or a chalkboard/whiteboard so that the groups can refer to them as they discuss.

- ❖ What is the difference between a belief in Christ and personal experience of faith? Is one more important than the other? Are there possible excesses on either end?
- ❖ What does it mean for the church to be “an institution maintained by and for the establishment?”
- ❖ Is the church today more “by and for the establishment,” or “for those who were disenfranchised, body and soul?”
- ❖ Who are the disenfranchised today?

Share a brief personal story of a positive memory of “going home” to get their memories primed.

In pairs, discuss memories of going home. What does it feel like? What are early family memories and what influence do they have on who you are today? **(five minutes)**

Show video: *ReConnecting*, Session Two.

Break into groups. Have someone in each group ask the following questions aloud. Ask a volunteer to take notes on the group's responses.

- ❖ How did you see Wesley's spiritual life developing through the course of the video?
- ❖ What were some of the spiritual milestones for him?

RECONNECTING

- ❖ Was his life focused more on the rules of the church or a relationship with God?

Come together and share reflections.

Describe next week's readings. Have the group open to page 31. Read the first paragraph of Chapter 2 to the group. Then have group turn to page 34 and ask them to look at the readings.

Say: Each day, a part of John's speech to the people gathered for the opening of his new church facility will help us to look at the our own Methodist history.

Remind them to be faithful in reading, writing, prayer, and attendance.

Play centering music, "Hearts of Passion." If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Session Three: Going Deep

Open with prayer.

Break into groups of three or four persons and discuss responses to last week's journal readings.

Say: In this session, let's see how we've done with the process of reading and reflecting. Was there anything in the readings that especially spoke to you about our roots in the Methodist movement?

Discuss the differences between the Church of England of Wesley's day and the Wesleyan movement. (See Slide 2 for a chart of these differences.)

Display the PowerPoint® slide containing the discussion questions or write the following questions on the board or on a large poster. Discuss as a group.

- ❖ How is our church like the established church of Wesley's day? How is it different?
- ❖ How is our church like the early Methodist movement? How is it different?

Share a brief personal story of a positive memory of feeling close to God, merely to get their memories primed.

Divide the group into pairs and ask them to discuss memories of feeling close to God: What was it like? How do you keep close to God? **(five minutes)**

Show video: *ReConnecting*, Session Three.

Break into groups. Ask the following questions aloud. Have someone take notes on the groups' responses. You may also use an overhead transparency or customize the PowerPoint® slide found in the graphics folder on the DVD. The interface for Session Three on the DVD also permits full-screen display of a presentation slide at this time.

- ❖ What is the meaning of the passage in the Book of Revelation that says, "...[Y]ou have abandoned the love you had at first"? (Rev. 2:4)
- ❖ What are some of the barriers to spiritual growth in your life? In your church?

Come together and share reflections.

Describe next week's reading and reflection time.

Say: This week, the readings concern Wesley's look at the church in his day, the Methodist movement, and the way in which he perceived the spiritual life of the people.

The journal reflections are somewhat different, offering not merely an opportunity to reflect and write, but also an opportunity to experience a "sampler" of different spiritual practices. This will require your willingness to really give these practices a try.

RECONNECTING

Now, open your books to page 49. (**Read** the first two paragraphs of the “My Words” section aloud.) I want you to see this in advance so that you can begin thinking about where you would like to set up your prayer place and what you would like to have there to help you focus and to provide the right atmosphere.

Remind them to be faithful in reading, writing, prayer, and attendance.

Play centering music, “Deep Peace.” If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Session Four: Outside the Gates

Open with prayer.

Say: To set the mood for the session that we will experience today, I will play a short clip from *Sister Act*, starring Whoopi Goldberg.

A Note about Showing Video Clips

The instructions for Session Four ask you to show a clip from the movie, *Sister Act*. This movie is available from most video rental stores. To show this movie clip to your group legally, it is important that your church obtain a Motion Picture License. The license is relatively inexpensive and is easy to obtain. The information for obtaining a Motion Picture License is available from MPLC or Motion Picture Licensing Corporation: (800) 462-8855. The web address for MPLC is <http://www.mplc.com>.

Show video clip. (If you do not have the MPLC license, watch this video clip yourself and describe it to the class as an introduction.)

If you rent the VHS tape, reset the counter to 00:00 at the beginning at the opening Touchstone picture logo. The clip from *Sister Act* begins at 53:30—the scene where Whoopi is lying in bed listening to scales being sung. It ends at 1:03:05—the scene where the Reverend Mother is looking out the window at the nuns on the street. If you rent a DVD, you will likely need to remove the *ReConnecting* DVD from the player and queue up the scene from *Sister Act*, then reinsert the *ReConnecting* DVD to complete the rest of Session Four.

Ask: What did you see taking place in this movie? Who was reached? What drew the new people in? Where did the nuns go? What was the result of their outreach?

Say: Wesley said he had to struggle with doing things differently to reach out to more people. He said, “I consented to become more ‘vile.’” That means he was willing to do things that he once had considered low or beneath him, all for the sake of reaching those who needed to know God. With this in mind, let’s look at the video for Session Four.

Show video: *ReConnecting*, Session Four.

Break into groups. Ask the following question aloud. Have someone take notes on the groups’ responses. You may also use an overhead transparency or customize the PowerPoint® slide found in the graphics folder on the DVD. The interface for Session Two on the DVD also permits full-screen display of a presentation slide at this time.

Compare Wesley’s Mission with Sister Mary Clarence’s mission.

Show remaining portion of *ReConnecting* video.

- ❖ Is our mission (the mission of the church) still “outside the gates?”
- ❖ Wesley was drawn to minister to the coal miners and brick makers of Bristol as well as the marginalized throughout England. To whom are we called to minister?

RECONNECTING

- ❖ Name some possible boundaries across which we might be called to communicate the Gospel. (**Possible answers:** Generational, social/economic, educational, language, race. Try to inspire them to come up with these and more. If they miss some of these answers, you may add to the list.)
- ❖ Wesley designed his ministries by listening for needs in the surrounding community. Glide UMC, likewise, designs ministries based on the needs of the surrounding community. Another approach is to design ministries for those who are inside the church already. How do we design most of our ministries?
- ❖ What needs exist in our community and what kind of a ministry or ministries might meet those needs?
- ❖ What difference does the doctrine of prevenient grace make to our planning ministry outside the gates?

Come together and share reflections.

Play centering music, “Different Roads.” If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Session Five: Clear Expectations

Open with prayer.

Ask: Has anyone here ever been involved in the starting of a church? A business? What do you remember? What was most exciting? What were some of the biggest challenges?

Say: This week's video will take us back to the early days of the Methodist movement in Bristol. Bristol was a big port city near large and productive coalmines. It was a major city in England in the days of Wesley. Wesley didn't go to Bristol with the intention of starting a church, but rather to make disciples and to help people and society be transformed by the touch of God. This video will take us back in time to glimpse that ministry and see how we can apply that model to our church.

Show video: *ReConnecting*, Session Five.

Break into groups. Ask the following questions aloud. Have someone take notes on the groups' responses. You may also use an overhead transparency or customize the PowerPoint® slide found in the graphics folder on the DVD. The interface for Session Three on the DVD also permits full-screen display of a presentation slide at this time.

- ❖ How was the ministry of the New Room like the church today? How was it different?
- ❖ Try to describe what was hoped would happen in the life of a person when he or she became part of the community at the New Room. What were the expectations?
- ❖ What did you learn about the early Methodist movement that you didn't know before? How does this apply to your church?

Come together and share reflections.

Remind the group members to be faithful in reading, writing, prayer, and attendance.

Play centering music, "Amazing Grace." If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Session Six: The Emerging Church

Open with prayer.

Ask: What do you remember about the ministry at the New Room?

How was ministry at the New Room different from the established church of the day?

How do you think the New Room was perceived by the established church of the day?

Say: In this video session, we will be able to visit with church leaders, scholars, and ministers of churches who are putting into practice many of the same ministry principles found at the New Room.

As you watch, try to remember the common principles of the ministry and how they affect the life of the church. We will be discussing them at the end of the video.

Show video: *ReConnecting*, Session Six.

Break into groups. Ask the following questions aloud. Have someone take notes on the groups' responses. You may also use an overhead transparency or customize the PowerPoint® slide found in the graphics folder on the DVD. The interface for Session Six on the DVD also permits full-screen display of a presentation slide at this time.

- ❖ What is the shared motivation in these churches?
- ❖ How important is that motivation in your church?
- ❖ Does your church have a clear vision and mission?
- ❖ Try to articulate the vision and mission of your church clearly enough so that a newcomer to your church can understand it.
- ❖ What are the three common elements of Methodist ministry?
- ❖ What parts of this model are present? Absent? What does this say to our church?
- ❖ What is your understanding of spiritual gifts?

Come together and share reflections.

Remind them to be faithful in reading, writing, prayer, and attendance.

Play closing music, "Hear Our Prayer." If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Session Seven: Let's Roll

Open with prayer.

Say: This is the closing session of this series, but we anticipate that it will not be the end of our discussion of the important challenges and opportunities facing our church. As you watch this evening, listen for new insights and ways that what we learn together might apply to our church.

This evening, we will play the first half of the video, pause for a brief discussion, then watch the second half.

Show video: First portion of *ReConnecting*, Session Seven.

- ❖ How do you respond to Tex Sample's comments and question? (What would you give to have your children or grandchildren develop a powerful relationship with Christ?)

Say: On Day Five of the readings, we looked at the day on which the foundation of the temple was consecrated. Look at your responses to the questions in the "My Words" section and share with each other some of your ideas. Make a list of the responses. *(If someone didn't have an opportunity to read and respond to that session, quickly reread the "God's Words" and the "Contemporary Words" sections aloud, then respond as a group to the questions.)*

- ❖ What was the shift in focus that enabled the revitalization of the ministry at St. Andrew?
- ❖ How does that shift speak to you or your church?
- ❖ In what areas do I (we) need to examine my (our) readiness for that shift?

Come together and share reflections.

Prepare several posters or flip-chart notes for a brainstorming session. At the top of each poster, write a broad heading to be used to help provoke thought and organize responses. Categories could include: Welcome/Hospitality Ministries, Ministries Outside the Gates, Spiritual Growth Opportunities, Who is not coming?, etc.

After time for prayer and reflection on the above questions, ask people to "popcorn" dreams or ideas. Have a scribe write the ideas on the corresponding poster. Ask that ideas be shared without comment to allow for a free flow and an open exchange.

Play centering music, "Take This Moment." If you are using the slideshow included on the DVD, the music will automatically play when you advance to the appropriate slide. The music can also be played from the DVD by clicking the **Play Centering Music** icon located on the Session menu.

Close with prayer.

Appendix One:

Group Models for Using *ReConnecting*

ReConnecting has been designed for use in a variety of settings. It can be used with individual small groups, for leader training, for preparation for long-range planning, or as a congregation-wide emphasis. Below you will find two sample schedules to start you thinking about the way in which *ReConnecting* would best be used for your congregation.

Network of small groups: A larger church with an existing network of small groups used *ReConnecting* as a small-group experience. Additional small groups were formed for those who wanted to participate, but who were not already active in a small-group ministry.

Congregation-Wide Emphasis: *ReConnecting* works well as a congregation-wide emphasis to renew vision and provide an atmosphere of excitement and a shared experience for looking at the future of the church. If you plan to use *ReConnecting* with the entire congregation as a special emphasis, the following structures should be considered:

Single meeting with breakout discussion groups or “huddles”:

Could be used as Wednesday night supper program or as a replacement for Sunday night worship. Below is a sample schedule:

- 4:45–5:30 Supper in the fellowship hall
- 5:30 Children to children’s area to participate in *J.W. and Company*, a children’s curriculum on John Wesley from Cokesbury (#818325, \$79.95).
- 5:30 Youth begin study of *Hearts on Fire! The United Methodist Story*, a curriculum resource from Cokesbury. (Student Resource, #727960, \$5.00; Leader’s Resource: *Fired Up! Youth Living as United Methodists Today*, #727979, \$5.00.)
- 5:30–6:15 Adults begin *ReConnecting* Session
- 6:20–6:40 Move to “huddle” groups for discussion and reflection
- 6:45–7:00 Groups come back together to share responses; closing prayer time

Multiple larger group meetings with breakout groups:

Offering the experience at several different times helps accommodate diverse schedules and ensure a high level of participation. One church used the following schedule:

RECONNECTING

Sunday night

- 4:45–5:30 Supper in the fellowship hall
- 5:30 Children to children’s area to participate in *J.W. and Company*, a children’s curriculum on John Wesley from Cokesbury (#818325, \$79.95).
- 5:30 Youth begin study of *Hearts on Fire! The United Methodist Story*, a curriculum resource from Cokesbury. (Student Resource, #727960, \$5.00; Leader’s Resource: *Fired Up! Youth Living as United Methodists Today*, #727979, \$5.00.)
- 5:30–6:15 Adults begin *ReConnecting* Session
- 6:20–6:40 Move to “huddle” groups for discussion and reflection
- 6:45–7:00 Groups come back together to share responses and closing prayer time

Wednesday morning

- 9:30–10:15 Adults begin *ReConnecting* Session
- 10:20–10:40 Move to “huddle” groups for discussion and reflection
- 10:45–11:00 Groups come back together to share responses and closing prayer time

Thursday night

- 6:30–7:15 Adults begin *ReConnecting* Session
- 7:20–7:40 Move to “huddle” groups for discussion and reflection
- 7:45–8:00 Groups come back together to share responses for closing prayer time

This schedule opened the doors for those who were involved in the leadership of children’s and youth programming to participate at another time, as well as making allowances for those who were not comfortable being out at night. Each session was led by the pastor and a lay leader to provide continuity.

Appendix Two:

Shared Excitement and Understanding

Implementing a Congregation-wide Emphasis on *ReConnecting*

It is much easier for a church to get excited about mission and ministry if members are motivated by a shared, common experience. Churches in the not so distant past held “revivals,” inviting the members of the congregation to attend and be reminded of the power of God in their lives and to be stirred toward the mission and ministry of the church as an outreach center. In recent years, the traditional revival has lost popularity because of stylistic issues, scheduling issues, and a great increase in other options for inspiring God’s people. Before the vast expansion of entertainment and involvement—from ballgames to shopping malls, and from *Survivor* to *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*—church leaders could get the majority of the congregation to come to a revival meeting over four to five evenings during a single week. The revival model, however, was not the important thing; it was merely a practical structure for its time. The important effect that came from a congregation’s participation in a revival was a common and shared experience at which the people intentionally were called into reconnection with the spiritual life and the mission of the church.

ReConnecting is designed as a journey of experience and discovery that is meant to provide that same dynamic of shared, motivating experience; yet is offered in a way that is more relevant to the schedules, habits, and practices of people in our contemporary society. If it is offered in such a way as to involve the majority of the congregation in a relatively short period of time, the church will be infused with a common sense of mission and motivation. People will be talking about the same issues and looking with new perspectives at the communities beyond the church. Imagine the energy for mission and ministry that could be released if the majority of the congregation were to share in this experience.

First, you will need to determine a good time of year for most of the congregation. While there are many times that would be possibilities for particular congregations, depending upon their particular situations, I have chosen the model of implementing the series during the season of Lent for the following reasons:

- ❖ Many groups look for resources to use for Lenten studies. The busy Christmas season is past, so people have more time to commit to a study series during this time.
- ❖ People are thinking about resolutions and getting their spiritual lives in order at the beginning of a new year. For this reason, they might be more receptive to participation in this type of study.

A Suggested Timeline for Preparation

October—(Month 1)

Play the video overview (the introductory session on the DVD) with leaders in the church and discuss possible benefits to the congregation of using *ReConnecting* as a church-wide emphasis.

November—(Month 2)

Brainstorm possible small groups where *ReConnecting* could be used. Consider both existing groups and the development of new groups.

Decide who would be able to facilitate the groups. Try to find people to facilitate the groups who are connected to others in an area of the congregation where you would like to encourage participation. Begin to recruit leaders to facilitate the process.

Consider time options. Some may be able to come only to a morning group, while others may be able to come only in the evening. There may be some who could come only on a weekend. Look at those you are trying to reach and try to offer options to meet their needs. Remember, the more who share in the experience, the more helpful the process will be to your congregation.

Recruit people to pray for the process and the congregation's participation.

December—(Month 3)

Write a letter addressed to the congregation explaining *ReConnecting* and the hope for broad-based participation. (This letter will be mailed in the first week of January). Two sample letters have been included in the **Publicity** folder on the DVD for your use or adaptation.

Write a newsletter article about *ReConnecting* that will arrive in homes close to the beginning of January.

January—(Month 4)

Week 1—Include mention of *ReConnecting* during a worship service. It would fit well in a sermon on looking at resolutions for a healthy congregation or a healthy spiritual life. Mail the letter to the congregation. If possible, show the introductory video clip (labeled "Overview" on the opening DVD menu) during worship to stimulate interest in the experience.

Week 2—Begin a sign-up process. For the next two weeks, include a registration card in the morning bulletin that contains a list of when sessions will be offered, space to select an option, a space to indicate a need for childcare, and a space for the person's name and phone number. (*A sample card has been included in the **Publicity** folder on the DVD that can be customized for your particular situation.*) Ask people to indicate their interest on the card and return it in the offering plate. Provide a nursery if necessary.

Offer additional opportunities for sign-up in Sunday school classes and other appropriate gatherings.

Compile registration information and adjust options as necessary.

February–(Month 5)

Launch groups.

Report ideas emerging from the brainstorming sessions to the congregation.

Hold a church-wide celebration when the groups have been completed and offer additional opportunities for those who were not able to attend the first time.

Develop a “Dream Team”

The task of the Dream Team is to go deeper into the exploration of the surrounding culture and methods of ministry. The group should be made up of people who are committed Christians, display the evidence of a heartfelt faith, have a can-do attitude, are willing to think “outside the box,” and are generally positive people. The presence of an overly negative person, or a naysayer, is a good way to stifle the ability of members of the group to creatively explore the possibilities that exist. This is a group to dream God’s dreams for the church. It is not to be a “power group” or a group that takes authority from other administrative groups.

I have found that when organizing the group, it is good to have a central book to use as a guide. Not that a book would be the only resource, or that the discussion of the group has to focus at all times on the contents of the book, but using a book can provide some needed direction or structure. While there are many helpful resources for exploring some of the issues introduced in *ReConnecting*, I have found none better than *NextChurch.Now* by Craig Miller (click the link on the title to order it at cokesury.com). This book is one of the best guidebooks to the challenges facing the Church and ways the Church can organize to meet those challenges. It has been developed out of years of experienced training people in new church development and church revitalization. The book is very readable and is filled not only with helpful information but also with worksheets and step-by-step instructions about what needs to be done to develop new worship services or ministry systems.

Other helpful information about the book can be found at <http://www.umcncd.org/nextchurch.html>.

A Dream Team is not a long-range planning committee. The need for a long-range plan may become evident as the Dream Team looks at the surrounding community, the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation, and new ministry possibilities and opportunities that arise. Members of the Dream Team might become members of such a committee, but not necessarily.

Resources for Developing a Long-range Plan

Alban Institute

Discerning Your Congregation’s Future

Lyle E. Schaller

Create Your Own Future (also an eBook)

Parish Planning (an eBook, 1971)

44 Questions for Congregational Self-Appraisal

Rob Weber

Visual Leadership: The Church Leader As ImageSmith

Go on a Holy Road Trip

There is nothing like the experience of going with a group from your church to a high-quality seminar to get ideas and additional inspiration for ministry. The time away from the normal demands of life is refreshing. Sharing with each other in some extended informal time provides a perfect context for sharing stories and hopes and dreaming God's dream for your church.

Listed below are websites of some of the teaching churches that offer seminars for churches wishing to increase their effectiveness. Contact the churches for information about their upcoming leadership events.

<http://www.frazerumc.org/> (Frazer Memorial UMC, Montgomery, Alabama)

<http://www.willowcreek.com/> (Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago, Illinois)

<http://www.saddleback.com/> (Saddleback Community Church, Mission Viejo, California)

<http://www.ginghamsburg.org/> (Ginghamsburg UMC, Tip City, Ohio)

www.gracehappens.org (Grace Community UMC, Shreveport, Louisiana)

<http://www.cor.org/> (United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Kansas City, Kansas)

<http://www.glide.org/ourwork/globalmini.asp> (Glide Empowerment Journey at Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, San Francisco, California)

<http://www.joyonline.org/joylead/> (Joy Leadership Center at the Community Church of Joy, Glendale, Arizona)

Plan and launch ongoing spiritual formation and study groups

Companions in Christ: This is a 28-week, small-group resource that invites participants into daily use of classic spiritual practices, opening them to an ever-deepening relationship with God. (Available from Cokesbury and Upper Room.)

DISCIPLE Bible Study: This in-depth Bible study program helps individuals and congregations experience revitalization and real change in their lives. Based on the model of Jesus and the Twelve, DISCIPLE groups consist of twelve persons and a leader. Groups meet for 2 1/2 hours each week (2 hours for Youth) after careful study and preparation by reading assigned Scripture daily, taking notes, and responding to questions for discussion. Each weekly session begins with a ten-minute video presentation by Bible teachers, pastors, and scholars who are top-flight communicators in the church.

Participation in the DISCIPLE Bible study program requires enrollment of a church, charge, or parish. The enrollment fee includes training for the leader of the first group of twelve and all materials necessary for that group—study manuals, teacher helps, a set of videotapes, certificates of recognition, lapel pins, an implementation resource, and additional components specific to each study. For more information, call 1-800-672-1789 or 1-800-251-8591.