

## **Stimulating Broad Participation in Bible Study**

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This Bible study opportunity is being offered to congregations across the Presbytery. While introducing the Bible study chapter in successive Presbytery meetings, congregations will have the follow-up opportunity to engage broadly back home in the study.

*The purpose of Bible study in the church is to cultivate the congregation as faithful missional community. Meeting together for Bible study will offer primary occasions for the Holy Spirit to shape afresh both the experience and the understanding of Christian community. It will contribute toward a new sense of calling and renewed experience of forming as a people who live to the praise and the glory of God.*

### **Ideas for stimulating broad participation back home**

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1. Engage the Session with the Bible studies as they become available.
2. Consider especially the sections “The Challenge to the Church” and “The role of Bible Study” in the first resource (*The People Called by God*). Identify and embrace a sense of why we want to do this anyway.
3. Working with the Session, consider how to enable the congregation to become aware of and excited about this opportunity.
4. With the Session identify various teams, groups, committees within the congregation, seeing them all as ‘small Christian communities’ for engaging in Bible study. Draw on existing structures (Sunday School classes, women’s and men’s groups, young adult and older youth groups, choir, etc.) and also form new groups, planning for specific times and places for small group Bible studies. Consider starting up weekday, weeknight, Saturday morning and Sunday morning groups, as may be appropriate for your weekly schedule. Try out some times and places that you haven’t done before or haven’t been done for awhile.
5. Communicate with the congregation, making the ‘case’ for broad participation. This is not “come if you want to” that gets ever only limited response, usually the same “Bible study people.” Instead, this is a time of intentional reflection, dialogue, and learning for the whole congregation.
6. Communicate the ‘learning objectives’ of the Bible study process.
7. Make time on the Session agenda each meeting to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Bible and each other.
8. Encourage and support the pastor in developing a sermon series to coordinate with the congregation’s Bible study.
9. Provide an opportunity for sermon talk-back or sharing session when preaching in a way that correlates with the Bible study.
10. Develop a way to learn from the experience of the Bible study groups. Find out, for example: Where was there energy? What biblical images were most stimulating? Which group processes energized the group? How well did people listen, share, and learn from each other? What was renewing about the experience? What will you do differently for the next Bible study?

### **Leadership for Bible study**

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This Bible study does not need leaders who are Bible experts. The printed resource itself provides the needed guidance to the content. It is more important that facilitators give attention to the purpose and goals of Bible study (primarily to get into the Bible together!) and to the norms that cultivate a fruitful learning environment.

Identify and enlist facilitators to lead the groups, then meet with them to address any questions or concerns about their work as facilitators. Point out the “Getting Started” section (pp. 8-11 of Chapter One/Part One on the Website), which contains learning objectives and helpful norms for the group.