



FAITH LEADER

Facilitator's Guide

*For Sandy Clingan Smith and Mary Welsh Owen—friends,
co-conspirators, and companions along the journey.*

Rev. Beth Pattillo

FAITH LEADER

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BETH PATTILLO



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Welcome to *Faith Leader*

Welcome to the *Faith Leader* program. *Faith Leader* has been a ministry of Woodmont Christian Church in Nashville, Tennessee. This program grew out of the need in one local congregation for in-depth spiritual leadership development. By focusing on spiritual self-discovery, spiritual practices, discernment, and a personal plan for Ministry, *Faith Leader* empowers laity to discover and live out their calls from God.

Faith Leader differs from secular leadership programs in its focus on spirituality as the basis for leadership in the local congregation and beyond. Spirituality—the depth relationship with God, self, and others—lies at the core of the program. Through twenty-six weekly sessions and two retreats, *Faith Leader* participants will discover authentic ways to engage in spiritual leadership in their congregations and in their communities.

Evaluations by *Faith Leader* participants frequently contain two important words—“life changing.” Participants and facilitators discover in the *Faith Leader* process the transforming power of the Spirit. We hope that you will enjoy facilitating this important program in your congregation. It has transformed our congregation, and we believe it has the power to transform yours.

Rev. Beth Pattillo
Woodmont Christian Church

For more information on *Faith Leader* or to find out about facilitator training, visit us online at www.faithleader.org.

General Information for Facilitators

Those of us who make the commitment to facilitate a *Faith Leader* group are usually interested in helping others reach their spiritual potential or in working toward fulfilling the mission and vision of our congregation. We bring a variety of church, professional, and family backgrounds to our efforts. Some of us are ordained ministers or professional church staff. Others are lay leaders who bring the perspective of the “regular folks” in the pews.

Each facilitator should identify his or her hopes and goals for the *Faith Leader* program. Take a moment to answer the following questions with respect to *Faith Leader*. Some questions seem to have obvious answers; bypass the routine reply for a deeper response.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. Who are you? (What is the most important thing your participants need to know about you? If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be?)
2. Where are you from? (What geographic locations or living situations have made you who you are?)
3. Why are you here? (At heart, what led you to agree to serve in this role?)
4. What do you want? (What would be most satisfying to you at the end of this process?)
5. Where is God in your life? (Be specific. Name activities, places, people, events, etc.)

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6. As a facilitator, what challenges you most? (What are you afraid of? What feels awkward before you've even begun?)

Periodically review these responses as the year progresses. They will serve to keep you focused and balanced.

PARTICIPANT WISH LIST

If you could have any participants of your choosing from your congregation, who would they be? List names in the space provided below.

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

Faith Leader is designed for participants who have established their families and/or careers. They have achieved some measure of success and are now looking for significance in their lives.

Who Should Be Involved in Faith Leader?

Several groups within your church are excellent candidates for the *Faith Leader* program.

First, the program can cultivate leaders whose potential the local congregation has not yet tapped. These prospective faith leaders may be spouses or adult children of established leaders in the congregation. Their gifts may have been overlooked, and they may have spent a number of years in their spouses or parents' shadows. They may be perceived as "helpers," but not have an identified ministry of their own. *Faith Leader* will provide an opportunity for them to explore their own gifts and call and to articulate their own ministry plans.

A second group who are excellent *Faith Leader* prospects are newer members who have not yet become established leaders in the congregation. They may have been significant leaders in their previous congregation but are not well known in your church. Through the *Faith Leader* small group, these participants can establish the necessary support and resource networks to emerge as congregational leaders. They can also identify a call to ministry unique to their new congregation, allowing them to put closure on their membership in their previous church and lay out a new path for ministry in their current situation.

A third group who are excellent *Faith Leader* prospects are church members who have been burned out by ministering in areas in which they were not gifted or who have been involved in highly conflicted situations. They can find renewal for ministry through returning to the basics of faith—exploring their spiritual gifts, strengthening their spiritual practices, and spending time discerning God’s call. *Faith Leader* can provide an important opportunity for healing in the context of a supportive, nurturing group representative of the body of Christ.

What Process Should Be Used to Select Faith Leader Participants?

Each congregation should decide whether they will use an invitation process or an open process to fill their *Faith Leader* group. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages.

By Invitation

By using the invitation method, the selection process can ensure a balanced group in terms of gender, theological orientation, length of membership in the congregation, and denominational background. An invitation method allows the congregation to call new leaders who wouldn’t necessarily sign themselves up for a spiritual leadership development program. Also, the invitation method avoids a disruptive member who may hijack the group because of personal maturity issues. The church can provide other resources and referrals to individuals who fall into this category. *Faith Leader* cannot replace the pastoral care necessary to address the spiritual needs of an emotionally immature individual.

By Self-selection

The open invitation method, on the other hand, allows for self-selection that may bring participants to the group whom present leaders might not have identified for spiritual leadership development. Happy surprises may occur. Church members whom the selection process might have bypassed, on the assumption these potential leaders didn’t have the time or inclination for the program, may well volunteer themselves. Also, this method ensures that those who sign up to participate are motivated and will follow through with the program.

How Does Faith Leader Fit into My Church’s Structure?

In either case, those overseeing the program will need to decide, in conjunction with the church staff and leadership, how *Faith Leader* will fit into the congregational structure and calendar. Some congregations may wish to have the board or session pass a resolution of support, affirming the call of the participants to this program. Recognition of the group members in the church newsletter is also a positive way to reinforce the value of participation in *Faith Leader*.

With either method, existing church leaders should be invited to nominate fellow church members for the program. If the open invitation method is used,

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congregations should still put some sort of nomination process in place to allow for the affirmation of the community for its leaders.

CARE AND HANDLING OF YOUR *FAITH LEADER* GROUP

In your facilitator role, you will serve as a spiritual companion to the participants in your group. As your participants begin to form bonds with you and with one another, you can foster deeper connections in the following ways.

Accept Diversity

The members of your group will bring different perspectives, histories, and theologies. They will exhibit a wide range of spiritual gifts, types, and practices. As the facilitator, you will need to accept each participant where they are on their spiritual journey. Putting aside preconceptions and prejudices can be difficult, particularly if they serve to protect our fears or vulnerabilities. Be open to learning from your participants, and you will be amply rewarded.

Model Desired Behaviors in Class

Your actions will set the tone for your *Faith Leader* group and for the sessions. Plan to arrive early enough to all sessions so that you can have the room prepared and your materials organized. Make a point of greeting everyone as they enter. Set a worshipful tone when you begin the session. Listen and affirm participants' thoughts. Share information in a timely fashion, and be clear about expectations.

Remember that your behavior does influence the process. At the end of the program, you will be rewarded when you see the participants mirroring your acceptance and hospitality to one another.

Keep Confidentiality

At the first session, emphasize the importance of confidentiality for your *Faith Leader* group process. Participants should be aware that group discussion should not be shared with others, even spouses. Again, you should model this important practice in your own conduct. Ask permission before sharing information outside the group.

Become Vulnerable

The more participants are willing to become vulnerable and share of themselves, the more effective this program will be. Be sensitive to the difficulty of self-disclosure. Participants will move toward greater disclosure at differing rates. Accept each person where they are, and gently encourage them as they open up to the group.

Know the Limits of Your Role

As the sessions progress, you will likely encounter one or more of your participants who are facing significant life issues. While you can serve as a spiritual

companion to those in your group, be aware of the limits of your role. Early on, develop a list of referral sources for pastoral counseling, career counseling, and other mental health resources. The *Faith Leader* group should never become a substitute for a support group or individual therapy.

NOTES

SESSION PLANNING

Preparation

Review the session plan early in the week. Complete the same reading assignment and homework as the participants. Familiarize yourself with the purpose and the key activity so you can reflect on them throughout the week. Divide up the responsibilities with your co-facilitator. Note any supplies or equipment you will need. Arrange for those items to be available. Be sure to do the assignment the participants will be asked to do. Make prayer a daily part of your preparation. On the day of the session or the evening before, review your plan.

As the sessions progress, you may want to invite participants to lead specific parts of the session, such as reading the scripture and/or providing centering music. Periodically send around a sign-up sheet for these tasks. Not everyone will take part, but for some this will be a good opportunity to share their individual faith.

Environment

The facilitators play a critical role in setting the tone for *Faith Leader*. This begins as early as the invitation process, but it is especially critical for the first several sessions and the opening retreat.

Make sure participants are aware of the time and day of the weekly meetings. The facilitators should arrive at least fifteen minutes early to prepare the room, particularly if you will be sharing your space with other church groups. The facilitators' goal is to create as contemplative and relaxing an environment as possible. This may be difficult in an ordinary adult education classroom. Work with your Christian education and property committees to ensure support for what you will need to do with the classroom. If you will be sharing space, have a secure area for your materials.

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Several important elements of the contemplative environment are:

Lighting: If possible, select a room where you can control the level of lighting. Some exercises will call for softer light, which encourages relaxation and reflection. Other elements that use more traditional forms of study may need brighter lighting.

Furnishings: While tables and chairs can be helpful for spreading out materials and taking notes, the tables serve as barriers to the group. Particularly in the early sessions, use chairs only. Participants can use their notebooks in their laps for writing. Later, particular exercises may require tables. Flexible furnishings will allow you to enhance the Faith Leader experience.

Sound: Arrange to have available the best sound system you can for the centering music. If you are limited to a portable stereo, try to get the best one you can. Participants are generally accustomed to high quality sound systems in their homes and cars. Try to provide the same level of quality in the *Faith Leader* experience.

Focal Points: A focal point or altar area in the room helps to promote a contemplative atmosphere. You may choose to arrange this important element in the middle of the circle of participants or, if you use a horseshoe-shaped chair arrangement, at the front. Gather a variety of items for this purpose. Candles, icons, a large Bible, a cross, drapes of different materials—all these can be used to good effect. As the sessions progress, invite different participants to take turns arranging the focal point for the week. Make arrangements in advance. They may want to bring items from home that have special meaning for them—a form of spiritual show-and-tell.

Flipcharts/Poster Board: While a white board or black board may be used to capture responses and summarize discussion, a flipchart or piece of poster board will allow you to retain the information for future weeks. You can post these visual reminders of each week's activity and insights on the walls of your room to build a visual summary of your work.

Display Space: If possible, meet in a room where you may leave the summaries of each week's work on the wall. This information will be useful as you progress through the *Faith Leader* program, since each section draws on the work of the previous one. If you do not have long-term display space available, consider typing a summary of each week's work and distributing copies to participants to keep with their Participant's Guides.

HINT: Advance preparation is the key to a successful session. Read the session plan at least a week in advance of your scheduled meeting.

Leading the Session

Having a co-facilitator will enhance the *Faith Leader* experience for you and for your group. You can divide the responsibilities according to gifts and interests,

but don't forget to challenge yourself and one another from time to time. As you progress through the sessions, work out strategies for backing each other up. Remember—the one who wields the magic marker (or the chalk) usually becomes the leader!

The facilitator who is not in charge of the activity should provide an objective perspective. This can be especially useful in observing which participants are talking frequently and which are contributing very little to the discussion. Also, the facilitator can read facial expressions and body language to get a feel for the participants' response. He or she may keep a running list of prayer concerns and joys to use during the closing circle.

Components of a Faith Leader Session

Welcome

Allow a few moments at the beginning for greetings and general fellowship. This may not take long in early sessions, but as the group's bonds deepen, you may need to be more forceful about calling them to order.

Do start on time; this will train the participants to arrive in a timely fashion. If you consistently start late, you will send the signal that punctuality is not important.

State the purpose of the session. You may want to repeat the purpose as a reminder at different points in the session.

Centering

The centering time sets the tone for the session and for *Faith Leader* as a whole. Following the instructions in Appendix B, light the Christ candle and share the selected scripture. Remind participants of the importance of good posture and breathing; then, play the centering music you have selected.

Some participants will quickly learn to appreciate this practice. Others may take longer to become comfortable. If a participant is disruptive during this practice, draw him or her aside before or after class and discuss options for increasing his or her comfort level. Some may wish to journal rather than sit quietly. In extreme cases, a participant who literally cannot sit quietly may wish to join the group after the centering time.

The positive benefit of centering is that it marks a difference between the day's busy activities and this time of reflection and prayer. By making it as worshipful as possible, you can increase that distinction. In the beginning, you may want to use instrumental music rather than vocal music so that the words do not distract from the calming influence of the practice.

Find whatever rituals work for your group, and use them consistently. A particular candle may take on special meaning. Or a certain song or style of music may prove most effective for your group. The key to developing any practice is repetition.

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Activity and Discussion

Each week's activity will be different, so it is difficult to give general advice. All the sessions are designed to be interactive discussions. Your role is not to lecture but to facilitate. Ask a question or two and then wait for an answer. Use silence to your advantage; count to twenty before asking an additional question.

Each session plan provides open-ended questions to stimulate discussion. As the program progresses, you will discover your own style. If discussion lags, break the group down into smaller groups of three or four. Although they may resist being divided, they will soon see that a smaller group inevitably increases the level of discussion.

Assignments

In addition to verbal instructions regarding the assignment for the following week, be sure to write the assignment on the board or on the flipchart. Emphasize the need to begin working on the assignment early in the week. If there is a choice about the assignment, encourage participants to name their choice to the group.

Some groups choose to establish an e-mail list for participants. Such a list can be used between sessions to ask questions about the assignment or share experiences. Talk with your group about their interest in such a list. Only establish an e-mail list if everyone in the group has regular access to e-mail.

Closing Circle

At the end of each session, have participants join in a circle. You may want to move to the side of the room, away from the chairs. If possible, have the group join hands. The leader then goes around the circle, asking each participant, "What is your prayer?" We don't often have the chance or the challenge of articulating our prayers so that others may lift up our concerns and joys. Participants may respond with a particular name or circumstance for which they would request prayer. Or, they may simply name an aspect of faith they are seeking, such as patience, peace, knowledge, acceptance, etc.

After these prayer requests have been articulated, close with the Lord's Prayer or other appropriate prayer. If your group is comfortable singing together, you might select a familiar song to use. At the conclusion, one of the facilitators should speak a short benediction, such as, "Go in peace."

The closing circle provides closure and closeness. Physical touch is important, but this may evolve over time. Spiritual intimacy, too, is built over time. Again, find a ritual that works for your group and use it consistently.

Helpful Tips

To maximize the benefit of having two facilitators, utilize the differing gifts of lay and ordained persons. The ordained minister or professional church staff person may be more comfortable with scriptural and theological issues. The layperson, on

the other hand, provides an example to which the participants may more easily relate. As you plan each session, note which parts of the session best suit which co-facilitator.

Being the timekeeper is difficult, but proper time management is important. Always start on time, and stay as disciplined as you can while still being sensitive to the needs of the class and the leading of the Spirit.

Finally, relax. After all, you are trusting God to make this process work, right? The *Faith Leader* process will be shaped by the participants. Each class is different. The facilitator's role is to get out of the way and let God work in participants' lives!

RETREAT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

The opening and closing retreats are integral pieces of the *Faith Leader* process. The opening retreat forms bonds that elevate the intimacy level of the group. This experience deepens the participants' relationships and lays the groundwork for their affirmation and acceptance of one another.

Similarly, the closing retreat provides an opportunity for closure and launching. The participants present their Personal Plans for Ministry and spend time in prayer for one another for the future.

Finding a Location for Your Retreat

Determine your retreat budget and then consider:

- Denominational or church-related campgrounds in your area
- Local retreat centers
- Other churches who might allow the use of their building

Retreat Particulars: The Four Ws

Why Have a Retreat?

Retreats build bonds. As with any immersion experience, the participants will benefit from the intensity of what occurs. The retreat also creates sacred time and space by drawing the participants apart from their everyday lives.

When Are the Retreats?

The opening retreat (Session 4) can be held anytime during Sessions 1 through 5. The closing retreat (Session 28) should be the final event of your *Faith Leader* program. Set the dates for your retreats as early as possible. It is vital that all participants attend the retreats. Participants will find it difficult to feel they are full members of the group if they miss the opening retreat. Also, if participants miss the closing retreat, they lack closure and will feel a sense of unfinished business.

Where Should Retreats Be Held?

Finding an appropriate retreat location may be the most difficult task in the *Faith Leader* process. While the retreats may be held at your church if necessary for budget reasons, you will have a more successful retreat experience if you are able to find

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a place with overnight accommodations. If at all possible, resist the temptation to sleep at home.

Some participants may be wary of going on a retreat. Try to provide them with as much upfront information as possible to allay their concerns. Determine your budget, and then research your options. In addition to church campgrounds, explore state parks, lake cabins of church members, or secular retreat centers.

What Makes a Successful Retreat?

Food: Plan for food well in advance. If possible, avoid self-catering so that your group does not have to use meeting time to prepare, serve, and clean up meals. In any case, appoint someone else to be in charge of the food. You will have plenty to do without worrying about feeding everyone. You can ask church members for help or have participants bring snacks and beverages.

Information: Prior to the retreat, make sure everyone knows where you are going and how to get there. If possible, provide a church van for those who wish to carpool. Be clear about when participants should arrive and when the retreat will begin. Give a specific list of what to bring and what style of dress is appropriate. Let them know what to expect of their retreat experience without spilling all the beans.

Fellowship: Make sure to allot time in your schedule for casual socializing. Bring board games for late nights. Ask one of the participants to arrange a hike or other outdoor activity during the afternoon break.

Involvement: Keep everyone involved by asking for their help. At the opening retreat, participants will each present two or three spiritual gifts. They can also sign up to lead a specific part of closing worship. Cultivate those with the gift of music to lead singing or play an instrument.

Expectations: You can expect strong evidence of God's presence during the retreats. Participants will experience some significant "ah ha" moments. Deeper relationships will emerge, and the pace of the class will gain momentum after the retreat. Be aware that some participants may experience some fear and denial with regard to their spiritual gifts.

THE PERSONAL PLAN FOR MINISTRY

The culmination of the *Faith Leader* program is the Personal Plan for Ministry. This worksheet will allow each participant to review the previous sessions and articulate a personal call to ministry. Participants may express some anxiety around this exercise early on. Try to allay their fears by discouraging them from thinking about the plan until the later sessions. As they move through the study, insights will emerge that they can then use to formulate their plan.

Just as you will complete the weekly assignments, plan to do your own version of a Personal Plan for Ministry. By engaging in the exercise, you will be better able to guide your participants through their own processes.

EVALUATION

Take time periodically to evaluate your *Faith Leader* process with your co-facilitator and with your group. Schedules, styles, and content may need to be tailored to meet the needs of your unique congregation or the tenets of your denomination. In addition, if you wish, you may receive periodic e-mail surveys from *Faith Leader* asking you to evaluate the sessions. Your input is vital, and we hope you will take a few minutes to respond.

If you would like to join in conversation with other *Faith Leader* facilitators, you can subscribe to our e-mail list. Send a blank e-mail to:

faithleader-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

NOTES

SESSION 1

Beginning the Journey

PREPARATION

Supply List

Prepare for This Week's Meeting

- Begin your own preparations by reading Session 1: Beginning the Journey, in Participant's Guide I.
- Review the following session plan.
- Make a list of any supplies needed.

Participants should receive their *Faith Leader* Participant's Guide I at least one week prior to the first meeting. Request that participants read Session 1: Beginning the Journey prior to the first meeting.

At the first meeting, be prepared to share a schedule for the year with the group, particularly the dates for the opening and closing retreats.

Be sure that your room is outfitted for the meetings, with appropriate tables and chairs. You will need a candle to light at the beginning of every session. This candle will remain burning throughout each meeting, as a symbol of Christ's presence in our midst.

The format for the centering worship and the closing circle appears in this session plan and in appendix B.

Review the Purpose of This Meeting

This meeting provides an overview of the *Faith Leader* program for the coming year and gives the participants a chance to begin to know each other.

The Session

Opening

Welcome everyone as they enter.

Remind them of the purpose of this meeting. "Today, we will talk about what you can expect in the coming year. We will also spend some time getting to know each other better."

Join Together in Worship (10 minutes)

- Explain that the Christ candle is a symbol of Christ's presence in our midst. We will light it at the beginning of every session and leave it burning throughout the session. Light the Christ candle while you read a Psalm, such as Psalm 136.
- Play the centering music you have selected. Tell participants the purpose of this practice is to calm them mentally and physically and to open them to God's presence. Encourage them to experiment with deep, even breathing to help them relax. Model good posture with your neck and spine in alignment and both feet flat on the floor in front of you. After the centering music has ended, bring them gently back to the group.

Overview (10 minutes)

Review the contents of all four Participant's Guides as an overview of the course.

Key Elements of the Program

Guide I: Spiritual Self-Discovery, including biblical models of leadership, spiritual gifts, and spiritual types.

Guide II: Spiritual Practices, including an assessment of our spiritual life, exploration of new ways to connect with God, and development of a guide for living that will enhance our spiritual lives.

Guide III: Discernment, including personal and congregational aspects of identifying God's presence and intention in our lives.

Guide IV: The Personal Plan for Ministry, including a review of what we've learned in the program, a detailed worksheet for developing a ministry plan, and the support of other participants in identifying and articulating the ministry plan.

Ask the participants to open Participant's Guide I to page 6. Explain that one of the biggest tasks of *Faith Leader* is to learn to ask the question, "Where is God in this?" We will use these God Words in the coming weeks to help us name where God is present in our lives. We will also use them to discern where God is calling us to use our gifts in the church and in the world. The blank spaces are for adding your own God Words as we move through the *Faith Leader* process.

Sharing Our Stories (40 minutes)

To help people get to know each other better, encourage them to share part of their faith journeys. Ask members of the group to tell something about themselves. To start the discussion, you might use any of the following prompts:

1. Tell the story of how and when you joined this church.
2. Tell the story of your baptism. How old were you? What do you remember, if anything, of the experience?
3. What has been the most fulfilling role you have served in this church?
4. Share a significant moment when you experienced the presence of God in your life.

Biblical Leaders Assignment (10 minutes)

Joseph	Samuel	Nehemiah
_____	_____	_____
Moses	David	John the Baptist
_____	_____	_____
Joshua	Abigail	Peter
_____	_____	_____
Deborah	Ruth	Stephen
_____	_____	_____

Ask participants to turn to page 10 of the Participant’s Guide I for a list of biblical leaders. Have each participant select a biblical leader to report on during one of the next two sessions. Write the name of the presenter next to the biblical leader in the chart above.

Using the Profile of a Biblical Leader worksheet on page 12 of the Participant’s Guide, participants should prepare to share three to five minutes either next week or the following session on the biblical leaders they have selected. Encourage them to focus on the designated scripture so the task does not become overwhelming. Rather than retelling the story of the biblical leader, participants should focus on presenting their responses to questions # 2, 3, 8, and 9 on the worksheet. Address any questions about the assignment before moving to the covenant and closing worship.

Establishing a Group Covenant (10 minutes)

Remind participants of the two required parts of the group covenant. As the basis for our covenant, we will hold all discussions in confidence. Confidentiality means we will not share any personal information or stories outside of this group or these sessions. Second, any participant has the right to “pass” at any time.

Invite participants to offer any additions to the covenant. Make sure there is consensus on every point. You may wish to consider such things as cell phone etiquette, excessive absences, or “side” conversations. Focus on the positive, offering each suggestion in an affirmative way. Instead of saying, “No sidebar conversations,” you might say, “Make sure all conversations are accessible to the entire group.”

Closing Worship (10 minutes)

Join together in your worship area. Take hands, or join together in another way that is comfortable for your group. The leader will go around the circle, asking each participant, “What is your prayer?” The participants may respond with a specific request to be lifted up or with a simple word or phrase—for example, *peace*, *understanding*, *courage*, etc. Many groups choose to close each session by saying the Lord's Prayer in unison. Alternatively, choose a closing song such as the Doxology. As the prayer or song ends, speak a short benediction, such as, “Go in peace.”

NOTES