



Learning From Strangers – Follow up Sessions



COLLECTION OF RESOURCES, CROSS-RACIAL/CROSS-CULTURAL APPOINTMENTS, CROSS-RACIAL/CROSS-CULTURAL APPOINTMENTS, INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY, INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY

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Download the book:

[Learning from Strangers, Pastor and Laity Edition](#)

[Learning from Strangers, Cabinet Edition](#)

Session 1 Strangers Bearing Gifts

Preparation: Read Chapter One: Strangers Bearing Gifts before gathering for small group session.

Gathering: Greet one another as people arrive. If possible, share light refreshments.

Introduction: God is good! All the time! All the time! God is good!

Indeed, God is good! God's goodness is experienced everywhere, all around us. One of the ways through which we experience God's goodness is through the people with whom God surrounds us: our family, friends, neighbors, our pastor and our church family.

In this session, we will explore God's goodness to our church, our community and to each other through everyone in our Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural (CRCC) ministry context.

As we begin, let us commit to listen without judgment and with an open heart and an open mind. Also, let us commit to a covenant of confidentiality so that what is shared in this group will stay within the group. All are invited to share their reflections, experiences and learnings and continue to be a source of God's goodness to one another.

Opening Prayer *(by the facilitator or a participant)*

Exploring God's Goodness: Having read "Chapter One: Strangers Bearing Gifts", reflect and share together following questions.

How do you define "strangers"? How is your definition of "strangers" different from what you were taught growing up?

1. Read Luke 2:22-40. Who are strangers in this story? What happened through the strangers? Imagine what would have happened if Mary and Joseph had not encountered strangers or if they had simply ignored them?
2. In "Chapter one: Strangers Bearing Gifts," it is stated that "Jesus was a stranger." In what ways was Jesus a stranger to the people living in those times? How is Jesus a stranger to us in our times?
3. How has your understanding of "strangers" shifted through reading the "Learning from Strangers" and the Scripture reflection from the Gospel of Luke 2?

4. In chapter one, on page 5, Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural (CRCC) ministry is described as “Christians as Strangers to Each Other,” and the reading offers opportunities for the pastor and congregation to be gifts to each other. List below all the ways the pastor and congregation are gifts to each other.

The pastor is gift to our congregation	The congregation is gift to our pastor

Perceiving God’s Goodness:

1. Describe God’s plan of goodness for your ministry as a Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural (CRCC) congregation? (Be specific, please.)
2. Share one thing you will take away from this session that will help you to be a gift of God’s goodness to your pastor and strangers in your midst?

Responding to God’s Goodness: Take a moment (30 to 60 second) to bask in God’s goodness for your church and think of one sentence you will share in a closing prayer.

For the closing, ask each person in the circle to share a sentence expressing gratitude to God for the gifts of goodness through your pastor, congregation and CRCC ministry.

When all have finished sharing their sentence prayer, invite the group to join in saying, “Thanks be to God! Amen.”

Session 2 Our Stories, God’s Story

Preparation: Read Chapter Two: To The Clergy and Chapter Three: To The Laity before gathering for small group session.

Gathering: Greet one another as people arrive. If possible, share light refreshments.

Introduction: The Bible is a collection of stories about the relationship between God and God’s people – all the faithful, the unfaithful and everyone in between. These stories are of lives lived against the backdrop of various times, places and circumstances. One unique feature about the Biblical stories is that the stories are not just stories about people, but they are stories of God.

These stories shed light on who God is and what God has done in their midst. Through these stories we meet God, we learn of God’s character, and we get to know God in an intimate way.

As people of God navigating through the present world with faith, we also have stories to share. Our stories reveal who we are, our fears, and our hopes. Our stories, like those of our ancestors in the faith, are not only about us, but they are also God’s story, revealing what God is doing in our midst; loving us and building up the community of believers.

As we begin, let us covenant with one another to listen without judgment and with an open heart and open mind. Also let us commit to a covenant of confidentiality so that what is shared in this group will stay within the group. All are invited to share their stories so that we can hear God’s story emerge out of our collective stories.

Opening Prayer: *(by the facilitator or a participant)*

Exploring God’s story in Our story: Having read Chapters 2 and 3 of “Learning from Strangers,” reflect on and answer together the following questions.

1. Briefly share your most recent experience of encountering “strangers” from another cultures and races. In what ways was God’s goodness experienced in that encounter?
2. Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11. What is the story about? Who is to tell the story? What does the story reveal to you about God?
3. Chapters 2 and 3 are a compilation of stories from pastors and congregations serving in Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural (CRCC) ministry settings. What joys and challenges do you hear from the CRCC congregations and pastors in the stories shared?

	Congregations	Pastors
Joys		
Challenges		

4. In what ways do you identify with the stories shared in these two chapters as a pastor? As a congregation? Share some of your joys and challenges.

	Congregations	Pastors

Joys		
Challenges		

5. As we heard in Deuteronomy 26, the people of Israel had their own story to share. God's story?

Put together a story for your own congregation thus far. In what ways is your story

Living into God's story:

6. Imagine how your story and God's story is going to be shared a year from now in similar? Think about people, worship, relationships, beliefs, and actions.

your CRCC ministry. Five years from now? What will be different? What will be

7. Share one thing you will take away from this session that will help you to live into

God's story in your CRCC ministry context?

Continuing God's Story: Take a moment (30 to 60 seconds) to hear God's story for your CRCC ministry and think of one sentence you will share in a closing prayer.

As a closing exercise, invite each person to offer a one-sentence expression of gratitude to God for being a part of God's story with your pastor and congregation through CRCC ministry in your community.

When all have had a chance to share their sentence prayer, invite all to join in saying, "Glory be to God! Amen."

GCORR is building the capacity of The United Methodist Church to be contextually relevant and to reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

