

# Looking for Life in the Liturgy

Shelley Chesley, M.D., and The Rev. Betsy DeRuff<sup>1</sup>

The following questions were developed to help us to elucidate our particular experiences of worship as we made parish visitations. We used them as a systematic instrument for bringing those experiences into the realm of meaningful dialogue. We hope that the questions will awaken awareness of the many levels on which the liturgy acts (body, mind, heart and spirit) and also provoke thought about how to use that awareness towards the greater expression and empowerment of the whole person in worship and in life.

- 1.) What evidence do we see of authentic community in this congregation? How well does this group seem to know each other? Are traditional family groups overlapping or expanding in a way that shows mutual comfort and trust with others in the group?
- 2.) How is the sense of wonder and mystery of a Holy Encounter fostered by the liturgy? Consider the use of silence, sound, music, gesture, incense and the spoken word to evaluate this.
- 3.) How does the liturgy empower the parishioners to live? Or, What drives this community? What is the call to? Is it parish-centered, community-centered, nationally-centered or globally-focused? (What relative proportions of attention does each receive?)
- 4.) What room is given to personal voice? Who participates and in what way? Does there seem to be conscious modeling of vulnerability by the leadership?
- 5.) What does body language tell us about people's sense of themselves in the liturgy?
- 6.) Has the physical space or the use of that space been modified in any way that impacts experience of the liturgy?
- 7.) What can be gleaned about the developmental level of faith of this congregation or what is the sense of where it is growing in this regard?
- 8.) What do the demographics of this parish seem to say about the Episcopal Church in this particular place and time?

---

<sup>1</sup> Chesley and DeRuff are colleagues working to plant a church in Marin County, CA, as part of the Diocese of California. Chesley can be reached at [glintfish@comcast.net](mailto:glintfish@comcast.net); DeRuff can be reached at [betsy@deruff.com](mailto:betsy@deruff.com).