

***“Springing into New Life:
Carefully Thinking about Ministry with Women in Your Congregation”***

NPWL is excited to announce a new publication, ***Springing into New Life: Carefully Thinking about Ministry with Women in Your Congregation (SINL)***. ***SINL*** is designed as a Leader’s Guide to assist in the process of assessing and discerning God’s plan for Women’s Ministries within the local congregation. It is a “guidebook,” not a “how-to” manual. We invite participants to adapt this process to suit their needs, rejoicing that the end product of the journey will be unique to each church. We pray the Leader’s Guide will lend ideas, while allowing the Holy Spirit to direct the path.

The following is sample text from NPWL’s *Springing into New Life: Carefully Thinking about Ministry to Women in Your Congregation*.

This study can be ordered through Presbyterians For Renewal’s online store at www.pfrenewal.org/store or by calling 502-425-4630.

[Sample 1:]

A Season of Listening

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Phase One: Who will listen? Who will lead?

It is possible that by the time you begin your **Season of Prayer**, you already will have determined who will be leading/facilitating and who will be involved in listening and addressing the issue of ministry with women in your congregation. If not, this is the time when it must be decided.

- Will the listeners be a newly appointed Task Force or one of the current permanent church committees, the current women’s board, or some other group tasked with this work? (For clarity, throughout this document, this group of “listeners” will be referred to as the Task Force.) Pray for discernment.
- A leader/facilitator also needs to emerge or be appointed, whether she is on staff or a volunteer. Pray for discernment.

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A Season of Listening

Phase Two: Meeting with the Designated Task Force

Pray together. We strongly suggest that a time be set aside at the beginning of each meeting, perhaps in a chapel or location other than the meeting space, where the group collectively prays for the overall mission of the Task Force and for the issues of the upcoming meeting.

During the meeting, provide an outline of this process and give an overview of the **Seasons of Praying, Listening, Planning**, etc., noting that there is no suggested timetable for any of the “Seasons”—that will be up to the Holy Spirit and your group.

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Exercise One (AI)

In order to get a feel for the process of Appreciative Inquiry, we suggest that you divide your Task Force into several groups of four and have each woman do the following exercise. Be sure someone within each small group is taking notes. NOTE: Exercises One and Two are also available in the Resources Section in this guide as a hand-out, page 18.

Exercise One Questions:

Reflect on your experience of being involved in a ministry with women (either within your congregation or in another setting).

- Remember a time when you felt most alive, most motivated and excited about your involvement.
- Describe the circumstances and your involvement.
- Who participated?
- What happened?
- Describe how you felt.

As one woman shares, have the others listen carefully for ways in which the Lord was at work in this experience. (For example: Was a need met? Did transformation occur? Was the gospel preached? Was God made known in some new way? Did healing occur? Was the Holy Spirit revealed?)

As you come back together in the larger group, have each group share their experiences, paying particular attention to the following:

- Are any patterns and themes emerging among the answers?
- What are they?
- What have you learned by doing this exercise?

Once again, keep good records!

[Sample 2]

A Season for Ministry Doing the Work of Christ in the World

The Leadership/Ministry Team should continue its “season of prayer” in preparation for ministry development and recruiting ministry helpers.

Reviewing the data your Task Force gathered, the Leadership/Ministry Team should determine its priorities.

- Is there an obvious need that should be addressed? How can we go about addressing it?
- Is there obvious leadership ready to serve on specific ministry teams?
- Return to the Provocative Proposals developed by the Task Force in **A Season of Understanding**, Step Four, page 12. Given your situation, which of the Proposals might be a good place to start? From each of these, the Leadership/Ministry Team should prepare a ministry plan which consists of:
 - a. ministry purpose,
 - b. important details defining this ministry,
 - c. broad planning time line to implement the ministry,
 - d. resources needed for success,
 - e. methods of evaluating the ministry’s effectiveness.
- What are the first steps we should take? PRAY.
- Set goals - small and sustainable goals. PRAY.

Don't be afraid to start small. Many women think they must begin with a major event (i.e. conference, retreat, elaborate dinner, etc.). It is better to start with a regular weekly Bible study which can incorporate women into community, rather than start with a major event and then have no way to keep women connected afterward. You don't need to be a big church or have a paid professional. Be willing to start small and see what God will do.

- Plan how you will accomplish the goals you set. PRAY and PRAY again.
- Make sure no one feels that she is working alone, or that the success of a particular ministry (or job within a ministry) is up to her.

- Set up a method for evaluation in 6 months, one year, 18 months, and then at least every two years after that. The Resources Section, pages 26-28, contains several sample evaluation tools that may be helpful.