

Virtual Pivot

A conversation with Paul Lessard, Alex Rahill, and Mary Hendrickson, p. 20

The New Reality for Ministry

1. What new technology has your church embraced due to the restrictions of Covid-19?
2. In what ways do engagement and discipleship thrive in a virtual format? In what ways are they hindered?
3. According to Paul Lessard, current conversations around biblical and racial justice as well as the Covenant virtue of thoughtfulness are main reasons people want to plant churches in the Covenant. What has attracted you to be part of the Covenant?
4. Alex Rahill says, “In the U.S., sometimes we have planted worship services, not churches.” What do you think he means?
5. What changes have taken place in your church during this past year that you hope will continue?

Rendered Free

By Arielle Grant, p. 30

Interrupting racial trauma by making space for healing

1. What was the racial demographic of your elementary school?
2. Arielle Grant was taught by the church and by the world to “Love your enemy” and suffer mistreatment silently. What is the balance between “turning the other cheek” and standing up for what you need?
3. Grant found community with people who had similar experiences to her own. When have you found healing from the presence of others who have endured similar challenges or traumas to your own?
4. What do you think Arielle Grant wants you to understand about being God’s image-bearer?
5. Grant says, “the church has an opportunity to disrupt systemic racism and to interrupt racial trauma by holding Black and brown women who are forced to struggle within these unjust systems.” How would you like to see your church engage in this mission?

Pinball Wiser

By Stina Hoberecht, p. 36

Deepening my faith through mindfulness and radical acceptance

1. Stina Hoberecht refers to life as a pinball game because of all the surprising bounces her own life has taken. When have you been redirected from your intended path to something that was better than your original plan?
2. What would concern you most about pursuing an education at an institution that varied greatly from your culture or beliefs?
3. How did the concept of “softening the rigidity” change Hoberecht’s faith journey?
4. Hoberecht quotes Richard Rohr as saying, “We cannot attain the presence of God because we’re already in the presence of God. What’s absent is awareness.” How would you apply this kind of awareness in your own life?
5. What did “radical acceptance” mean for Hoberecht and what might it mean for you?

The Advent of Hope

By Bob Auger, p. 40

Reopening positive pathways in a quarantine that feels endless

1. What traditions and celebrations have you had to cancel or adapt in 2020?
2. How is hope connected to your own attitudes and mental health?
3. Which of the five pathways to hope described in the article resonates most with you?
4. What is communal hope and how might it redeem some of the loss and anxiety of the past year?
5. How might the imagery of Advent candles bring hope to those struggling with grief and uncertainty?

Frozen Thanks

By Kate Blake, p. 44

The nature of winter and the nature of God

1. What is your favorite part of winter weather?
2. How are you adapting your holiday celebrations according to Covid-19 restrictions?
3. As you recount the past year, what are some things you are thankful for?
4. What part of Kate Blake's story shows you that God is our sustainer?
5. What parallels do you see between the freezing water of the lake and the living water of God?

The Audacity of Joy

By Dana Bowman, p. 48

How do we celebrate Christmas in 2020?

1. What is the meaning of your name? Does it connect in any way to your personality?
2. Where have you found joy this past year?
3. Dana Bowman says, “Maybe joy can be a bit of a rebel.” What experiences have you had that would lead you to agree with that statement?
4. Why is joy so deeply connected to Christmas?

When Branches Grow

By Tim Hawkinson, p. 35

Lean into something lasting, like planting trees.

1. What trees are growing near your home and what makes them special to you?
2. What did you learn from the connection between the Hebrew words for hope and rope?
3. Tim Hawkinson says, “Biblical hope is most present when opportunities to envision a positive outcome are few.” What stories from Scripture can you think of that would prove this statement to be true?
4. What metaphorical trees are you planting in this time of uncertainty that are increasing your faithfulness and hope?

No Matter Who Is in the White House...Christmas Is Coming

By Leeann Younger, p. 47

We are called to be Christmas, in places where it feels as if winter might never end.

1. How did you navigate the stress and division of this past election season?
2. Leeann Younger predicts that after this year's election, someone will say, "No matter who is in the White House, Jesus is still on the throne." Have you heard this said? What was your reaction to it?
3. Younger uses the phrase "Jesus juke." Can you think of any other examples of a Jesus juke?
4. If we are called to "be Christmas," what does that look like in your context?

If It's Sheep Versus Goats, Pick the Goat

By Jelani Greenidge, p. 51

Will the rancor about race propel America beyond polite dishonesty into real conversation?

1. What do you remember most about Muhammad Ali?
2. Jelani Greenidge compares the misunderstanding about his t-shirt with discussions on racism that occur online. Why is it more difficult to have conversations online than in person?
3. What is the cause of misunderstandings regarding the definition of racism?
4. Greenidge says, "I lament every missed opportunity for genuine dialogue, mutual learning, and compassion, because the worse things get, the fewer such opportunities will remain." What conversations regarding race still need to happen within your workplace or communities?
5. In the passage about separating the sheep from the goats, Matthew 25:40 says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (NRSV) How does the phrase "members of my family" impact your understanding of this verse?