

Free to Love

Session Seven

Online 2020-21



 Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA

Courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders for the sake of the world

Free to Love

Session Seven Participant Outcomes:

1. Describe the growth you've experienced in becoming a courageous, resilient, faithful leader.
2. Develop a project to implement over the summer which will enable you and/or your area of ministry to become healthier and more vibrant.

Preparation for this Session:

- Read this section of the manual and bring it with you.
- Meet with your ministry team and talk about ideas for a project to implement over the summer which will enable your faith community to become healthier.

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Overview of Theory U

The Call and Crisis of Our Time

In his book *Theory U*, Otto Scharmer writes about his discoveries in working with organizations across the globe and how they are struggling to stay effective and relevant in a global culture of continuous change. Leaders today must recognize the crisis and call of our time to become transforming leaders—leading from a totally different vantage point which he calls the Source, and we, in the Church, call God. The “crisis reveals the dying of old social structures built on pre-modern, traditional and modern industrial forms of thinking and operating.” Scharmer states: the “call is to a shift to a new form of presence and power that grows spontaneously from groups of people with a different quality of thinking, conversing, and collective action which operates from a real future possibility.” What Scharmer is saying here is that there is a Presence and Power working beyond us, and that our job is to discern where that Power is leading us to participate in the emerging future. For us in the Church, it’s God’s emerging future.

Scharmer points out that there are three common responses to the critical situation we find ourselves in today. Some people might want to:

1. Return to the order of the past.
2. Keep going, focusing on doing the same thing faster and better.
3. Break the patterns of the past, tuning into our highest future possibility—and beginning to operate from that place.

Universal love flows through you from that Deeper Source as a vital energy much more than an idea.

Richard Rohr, p. 63, Just This

This third response needs to be cultivated within ourselves and in our communities of faith. Both Edgar Schein in his work on changing culture and Ed Friedman with his insights into self-differentiation clearly state that our highest future possibility begins with the leader. Scharmer agrees: “What counts is not what leaders do and how they do it, but **their interior condition**, the inner place from which they operate or the source from which all their actions originate.” For us as Christians, that interior place is the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. To function from that place means we need to be differentiated **and** centered in God.

Transformational Change Process

In Session One, the four fields of Theory U were introduced. In this session, we will take a closer look at the path of the U. This transformational change process begins on the left side of the U (Diagram 7.1) and pulls together three key dimensions of change. The model moves down the left side, across the bottom of the U, and back up the right side. We start where we are at, listen deeply to our own hearts, the communities that surround us, and God’s vision for us revealed in Scripture and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

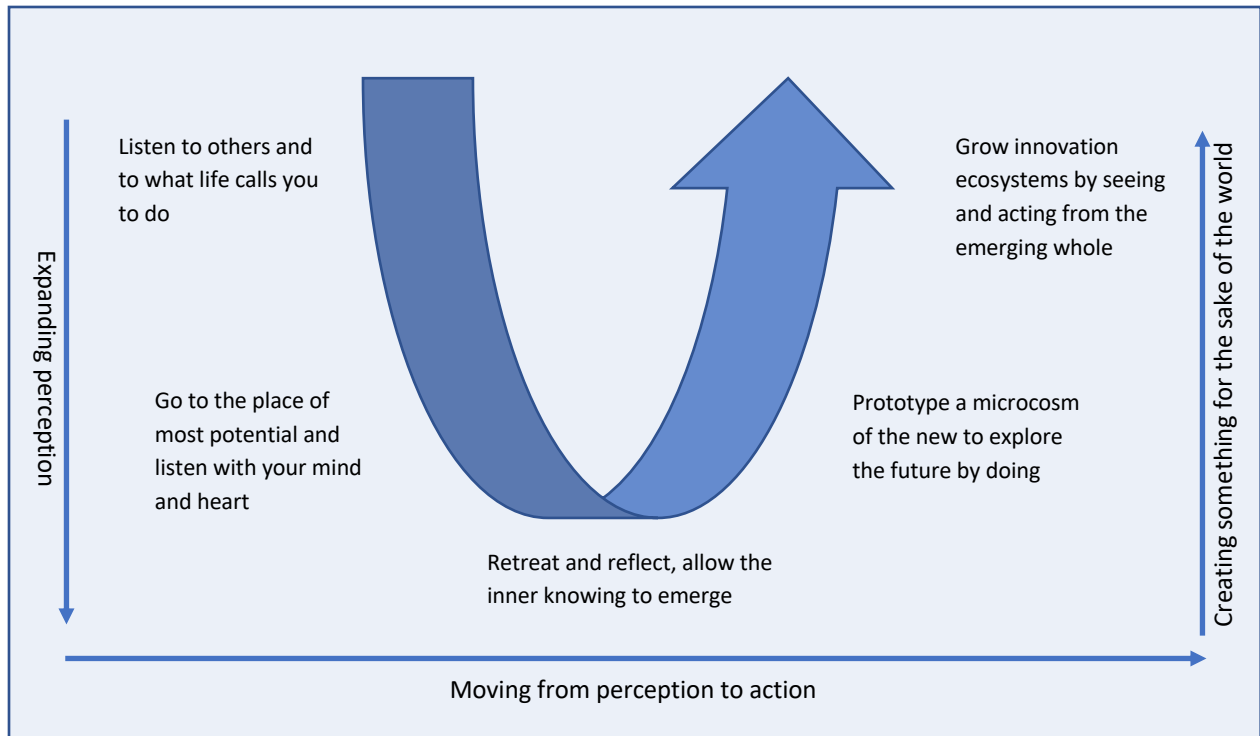


Diagram 7.1

Without reflection, conversation and mindfulness, we tend to download what we have done in the past and come up with a standard, already practiced solution. Scharmer calls this re-acting.



The four fields of Theory U, introduced in Session 1, teach us to expand our perception of ourselves and how we are connected to the communities and systems we inhabit. By moving deeper into the system, we gain perspective that allows us to see ourselves, our connection to our communities, and our capacity to think and respond beyond simply re-acting. By moving down the U, we begin to see the potential for change in our structures, our processes, and even our thoughts.

Moving down the U into deeper levels of listening, we increase our capacity from the shallowest response, 're-acting' to the most life-giving work of 're-generating.'¹ The above diagram and the four below can be found in Scharmer's original graph in his book *Theory U*. The pieces are separated in this manual to demonstrate how each step down the left side of the U invites us to think more deeply about the systems we create and inhabit.

¹ Scharmer, Otto, *Theory U*, pp.29-30.



2. Focusing: Surfacing our current reality	RE-STRUCTURING	Creating new structures and practices
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In this three-dimensional practice, we begin by focusing on our current reality. In relationships and in conversations we need to tease out what is really going on, surfacing the current reality. In this step, we analyze the structure of our organization or community. Making changes at this level brings about structural changes, changes to how our organization is mapped out.

3. Broadening: Perceiving other perceptions	RE-DESIGNING	Creating new core activities and processes
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The path of the U, however, encourages us to go deeper still. When we allow ourselves to see, feel, and understand other perceptions beyond our own, our vision expands. We begin to see opportunities for re-designing the possibilities, instead of simply re-structuring what already is. If we were to stop at this level, we would be creating new core activities that might be helpful to changing what we do.

4. Deepening: Dialogue -- surfacing deeper assumptions	RE-FRAMING	Creating new thinking and principles
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Yet, still, we are invited deeper. Throughout this course, we have been working hard to increase our self-awareness so that we might become aware of our deeper, often upspoken assumptions of how we connect or blindly live with unidentified obstacles to our connectivity. Really looking at our assumptions, uncovering those deep seeded, unhelpful ways seeing our community and world brings us closer to re-framing and being able to create new ways of thinking.

5. SHARED PERCEPTION: Uncovering the common will	RE-GENERATING <i>Where does our commitment come from?</i>	COLLECTIVE ACTION: Putting purpose into action ²
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At the bottom of the path of the U, we find ourselves at a place of real transformation. Scharmer uses the language of the “common will,” what we come to understand when we see the world from someone else’s eyes. Within Christian theology we use the language the Body of Christ or the Reign of God. Scharmer uses ‘Source’ or ‘Presencing’ to name the power here at the bottom of the U. Paul Tillich, a great theologian from the mid-twentieth century, gave us the language of ‘Ground of our Being’ for an expansive understanding of God. Here at the bottom of the U, this transformation opens up God’s will for us and is truly generative—creating God’s new thing. Here at the bottom, we find the courage to let go of what we thought we knew and allow God to be part of what we are creating. We move from our

² This graph can be seen in its entirety on pg 29 of Otto Scharmer’s *Theory U*.

increased perception into action. At the bottom of the U, we open ourselves to God who is the Source of our life, mission, and work.

The Journey

The wisdom and insight of Theory U comes through the three-dimensional movement down the left side of the U, ever deepening our perception of how we and our communities are connected and what is really at stake. When we connect to the Source at the bottom of the U, having let go of all the unhelpful assumptions and rigid molds, the spark of creativity emerges and we are able to move from perceptions to actions, as demonstrated on the right side of the U (Diagram 7.2).

The Christian life is simply a matter of becoming who we already are. But we have to awaken, allow, and advance this core identity by saying a conscious yes to it and drawing upon it as a reliable and Absolute Source.
Richard Rohr, p. 65, Universal Christ

Below is another outline of the steps through the path of the U:

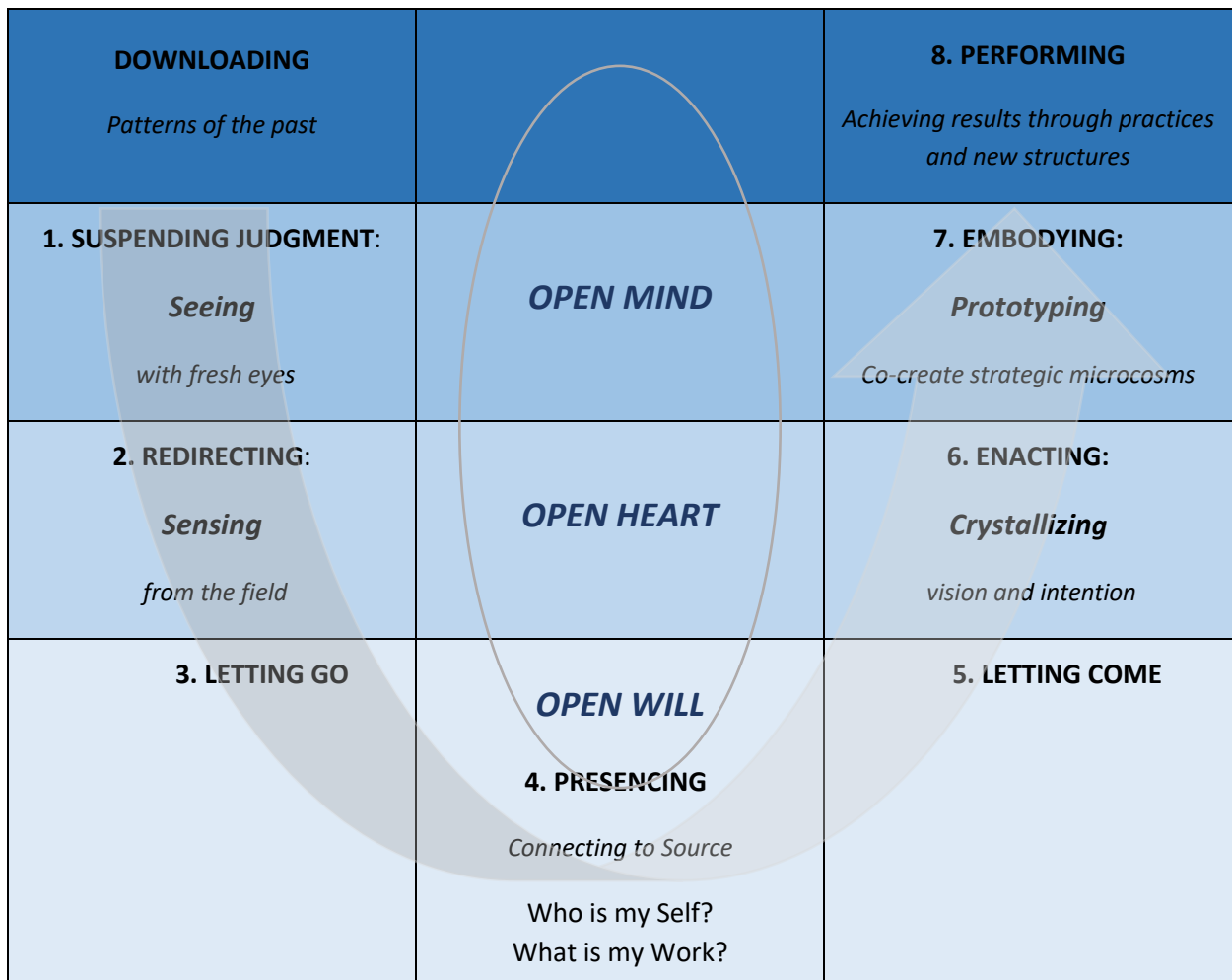


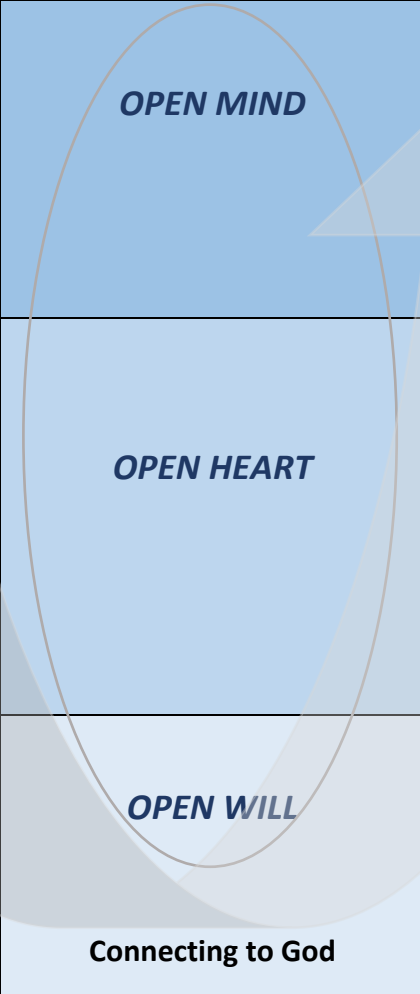
Diagram 7.2

- Step 1:** The inner work of the left side is key. The first level invites us to see what is really going on by **opening the mind**. This means facing what Scharmer calls the **Voice of Judgment**. It means suspending our prejudices, past responses, jumping to analysis and conclusions, and reacting. It means looking at the data with eyes wide open, intentionally inviting new and different—perhaps even opposite perspectives—in order to see with fresh eyes.
- Step 2:** The next step is a deeper dive into the heart. This calls for opening not just our minds, but also **opening our hearts** and sensing the connectedness of all people, all parts of the system to everyone involved and effected by the work being done. Scharmer says this involves facing the **Voice of Cynicism**—which encompasses all types of emotional acts of distancing. Opening our hearts calls for being vulnerable and connected to our Self and others.
- Step 3:** In the third step, we must dive deeper still by **opening the will**. Opening the will means letting go, in a “Thy will be done” sort of way. Opening the will involves facing the **Voice of Fear** and all those things we do not wish to lose in order to entrust ourselves to God and God’s will.
- Step 4:** At the bottom of the U, in this transformative place, we find the intersection between our true Self and our true work, also known as Vocation/Ministry/Purpose. Breakthroughs occur in this deep space, and we sense direction for the future. Having spent intentional time opening up our mind, heart, and will, we and our community are open to connecting to the future, to God’s dream for the world. Here we ask ourselves the deep questions: Who is my Self? As beloved children of God, what is my/our work? What are the opportunities emerging in our community that will embrace God’s dream for the world? The future is unfolding, how do we seize the large and small invitations God is offering?
- Step 5:** Moving up the right side of the U is the creative process of the emerging future. Prayerfully consider what might be emerging for you and your community. What ideas and opportunities might be possible? Now that you have ‘let go,’ spend time breathing in all that God is doing.
- Step 6:** When the idea or ideas begin to come, crystalize or clarify the emerging vision coming from the highest future possibility. Let vision come into being and put some flesh on what is emerging, test it, and begin to act on it.
- Step 7:** Crystalizing leads to prototyping or enacting your ideas. Put your plan out there for feedback—start enacting your work in a new way. Check-in to see if your vision aligns with God’s purpose, with the faith community, and those beyond the faith community. Prototyping doesn’t mean you have to wait until all is perfect. Prototyping means putting your work and ideas into action in small ways in order to gather the feedback necessary.
- Step 8:** Having gone through the path of the U, your performing will be qualitatively different than if you had just used the patterns of the past, or problem solving harder and faster in the same old ways. The path of the U changes our ministry in life-giving ways. We are transformed by connecting more deeply with the world around us. This process integrates the creative aspect, the relational aspect, and the new structural aspect of the emerging future plan.

A Template for Transformational Change

Thomas Merton has said that there is a difference between living for God, living with God, and living in God. The Church has focused on helping people with the first two perspectives through programs, worship services, and mission. We believe our calling today is to cultivate a place where we can live in God. Living in God means continually discerning God’s next steps for us as we follow the path of the U and cultivate courage, openness, and spiritual practices connecting us to the Holy Spirit within ourselves and our communities.

The Path of the Leader

DOWNLOADING <i>Patterns of the past</i>		PERFORMING <i>Achieving results through practices and new structures</i>
Seeing with fresh eyes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JoHari Window • Feedback • Emotional Intelligence • Observe from the balcony • Iceberg • Motivate change • Discern adaptive challenges 	 OPEN MIND	Embody the Change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-create strategic microcosms • Structures and practices to refreeze the change
Redirecting from the field of relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability shields • Renewal/Apostolate • Trust development • Conflict management • Ladder of Inference • Relationship Cycle • Political landscape 	 OPEN HEART	Enact new vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New programs, services, ministries, behaviors, practices
Letting go: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual practices • Authenticity 	 OPEN WILL Connecting to God	Letting come: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop vision and intention for God’s emerging future

As leaders, it is important to cultivate that inner connection to God regularly and to make sure to **open our minds, open our hearts, and open our wills**. Leaders must lead through the path of the U by offering ways to look at challenges and opportunities with fresh eyes, suspending judgment, filters, conclusions, etc. This leadership work calls for self-awareness and self-differentiation. Moving further down the U means connecting with people in daring leadership ways and cultivating an environment where others can safely connect as well. Leaders must learn to build trust, increase awareness of vulnerability shields, develop emotional intelligence, and bravely ask for feedback. Moving to the bottom of the U means being diligent about spiritual practices which will allow the leader to listen and connect with God. Moving up the right side of the U allows those impulses of creativity to emerge so that we courageously create spaces where leaders and followers can play together to put flesh on God's new vision.

Working the U for Groups

Working the U in your faith community follows the same path as for leaders. As groups move down the left side of the U, they will also need to suspend judgment and work on building trust to connect with one another and God on a deeper level. The models, tools, and information we have been working on throughout the year will hopefully help equip leaders and faith community teams to be able to move down the U effectively and discern God's next steps in their future. Summer projects are a way for teams and individuals to employ some of what they have learned and move their community down the U toward the bottom, to the transformative space.

Faith Community Project Development

Over the summer, you will implement a project in your faith community, your ministry, or your personal life as you apply and integrate what you have learned this past year. The project needs to be something which will move you as a person and leader, and/or your community or ministry area to a healthier state, deeper place spiritually, more adaptive stance, or new life-giving initiative. The project needs to be something which can be implemented over the summer. The project might be something you are already working on and want to perhaps do with more intentionality, utilizing some of what you have learned. You may wish to begin by thinking about the Emotional Intelligence Quadrants to see if there is one area you would like to focus on such as Self-Awareness, Self-Control, Community Awareness, or Community Management. The Project Development Worksheet provided in this session will help you think through what the project might look like. You will work with your faith community team members or a small group of other individuals to develop and implement this project.



Summer Project

Purpose:

- In your faith community create an opportunity to experiment with concepts, tools and skills developed throughout the first year of this program in order to hone your ability to lead and influence the people in your context.
- We have spent the year learning about ourselves and the community that surrounds us. We have become more aware of how we show up in the world and our impact on others. The summer, when we are not gathering for new sessions, is a great time to play with and experiment with these ideas and concepts.

Where to begin:

- If you are participating with at least one other person, work together to design a new project/program that will help your community thrive in life-giving ways, or choose a project/program already planned to analyze, tweak, and further this work for the sake of your community.
- If you are an individual, not participating with your faith community, choose a project either with your faith community or your professional/personal life and apply the strategy. You will be working with other individuals to form a supportive group.
- The outline and questions will help you think through the project in a systematic way. The questions will help you go deeper, uncover assumptions, and clarify your purpose. Over the summer, you will work with other communities for support, encouragement, and accountability. A trainer will be assigned to your group, but the trainer is only there for backup if you need guidance. Summer projects are your opportunity to step into experiential learning and apply your knowledge, skills, and ability in specific ways.

Recommendation:

- Plan something doable that will give you an experience of success. If the project is too big, you will not be able to experience the positive reinforcement of success by the end of the summer. If BIG is the direction you are being called, design it in chunks. Think realistically about what can be done in three months. If your project is too small, you won't get the feeling of accomplishment needed to keep going.

Steps to be taken:

1. Pray and ponder about an area of ministry that needs your attention.
2. Come together with others in your faith community, share your ideas and listen to where the Spirit is calling you together.
3. Use the format offered in the outline to put your ideas in writing so that you can share your plan with other people for feedback.
4. Meet with your assigned new small group to share your ideas and get feedback.
5. Implement your project.
6. Meet again with your small group to share your experience and get more feedback.
7. Further your project.
8. Meet again with your small group to share how the project is unfolding, receive feedback, celebrate success, and reframe failures into learning.

Project Development Worksheet

Project Goal: Something which will address your growing edge as a leader or the growing edge of your faith community to better participate in God's Reign; free to adapt, emerge into God's new future, engage the world around you, and be transformed. This can be something you are already doing, or it can be something new.

Observing the Faith Community System:

- What tools, models, or frameworks will you use to help you accomplish this goal and how will you use them?
- What are the strategic assumptions you are making about the implementation of this project? How will you get other people to be involved in this process?

Interpreting the Data:

- Who will be involved in interpreting the data? What conversations will be most helpful to you?
- How will the data and interpretation be communicated and utilized in the faith community?

Re-Directing and Letting Go:

- How can creative space be developed by building trust, vulnerability, and spiritual practices?
- What does the community need to let go of?

Action Plan:

- What are the steps you need to take to implement this project?
- What will the project require of you as a spiritually grounded, differentiated, connected, adaptive leader?

Project Presentation and Critique Process

Each faith community needs to present their project and be reviewed by the support team. Divide the time allotted so each faith community team has an opportunity to present.

1. Team member presents project outline by sharing a document to the group using the presentation worksheet format.
2. Support Group listens to the presentation asking clarifying questions and considers the following:
 - a. How does the project clearly move toward the accomplishment of the goal?
 - b. What other tools, models, frameworks might be used to gather data or observe what is going on in the faith community system?
 - c. What other ways might team members get faith community members to be engaged in this process?
 - d. What other assumptions or leadership demands might emerge in the process of executing this project?
 - e. What does the team need from the support group over the summer to help them with this project?
3. Presenter offers feedback to the support group.

Repeat the process for the next project presentation.

Summer Support Groups

Summer support groups will be formed during Session 7 and be made up of teams and individuals of two or three faith communities. This small group is different than the small group you have been meeting with throughout the year. A trainer (not necessarily the one who has led your small group this

year) will be assigned to your group, but the trainer is only there for backup if you need guidance. The group will meet over the summer to offer support and be a think tank or sounding board for the development and implementation of the summer projects. The timing and frequency of meeting over the summer is up to the groups as they form in the session. The idea is to connect with others doing similar work, practice being vulnerable and connected, encourage one another to try new things, pray for one another, and build community across the synod.

References for this Session

- Rohr, Richard, *The Universal Christ*, Convergent Books, 2019.
- Scharmer, Otto, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009.



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