

Practitioners Pre-Meeting

Co-Convener: Lisa M. Weaver is the Executive Minister at Riverside Church in New York City; Bryan Cones Pastor and Priest-in-Charge at Trinity Episcopal Church Highland Park and an honorary postdoctoral researcher in the University of Divinity at Pilgrim Theological College, Melbourne.

Members in Attendance: Jennifer Baker-Trinity, Carl Bear, Timothy Brunk, Bernadette Gasslein, Sarah Kathleen Johnson, Don LaSalle, Michael McMahon, Lawrence Mick, Daniel Schlorf, Vicky Tufano, Paul Turner, J. J. Wright

Visitors in Attendance: David Anderson, Justin Huyck, Meg Matuska, Marissa Sotos, Victoria Zibel

Description of Work: At the request of the academy's president, Kim Belcher, Lisa M. Weaver and Bryan Cones co-convened a pre-meeting "practitioners," a broad group of academy members and visitors, most of whose work is outside the college and university contexts. The group of about twenty included publishers, editors, musicians, denominational staff, and congregational clergy, among others, and represented a range of church affiliations. The purpose of the gathering was to surface the particular needs of practitioners and discuss ways they might serve and be better served by the academy.

The group began by sharing interests and concerns. Interests included the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on congregational worship, formation for both liturgical leaders and assemblies, addressing the ecological crisis through liturgy, engaging political polarization in prayer, and the participation of young adults and "occasional attenders" in worship. Most of these areas were also expressed as "concerns" to the extent that each reflects an area of focus that needs more attention. Among these concerns, those gathered noted the declining opportunities for the formation of those who prepare and lead liturgy across the churches, reflected in fewer programs that include liturgical scholars on their faculties.

While there was no desire to create a new seminar, the group expressed an interest in continuing to meet to explore ways to bridge the work presented in seminar conversations with various congregational contexts. Such projects might include development of resources that seek to translate more challenging forms of academic work into workable forms for congregational prayer. These might be used to fund prayer opportunities at academy meetings. The group also proposed developing resources for teaching liturgy, especially for those for whom liturgy is not their particular field of expertise.

The group agreed to reconvene at next year's academy meeting to follow up on this initial gathering, with Lisa and Bryan co-convening.