

Describing a Christian Resurgence Circle

A CRC Is Not:	A CRC Is:
<p>A Church School Class</p> <p>A Study Group</p> <p>An Open-Discussion Group</p> <p>A Circle of Friends</p> <p>A Meditation Circle</p> <p>A Spirit Group with Spirit leader</p> <p>An Interreligious Dialogue</p> <p>A Men’s or Women’s Support Group</p> <p>A Peer-Counseling Circle</p> <p>A Social Action Task Force</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">All these activities are good and may be led or participated in by CRC members, but they do not describe a CRC.</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Every invention of religious practice needs to describe its practice and make clear what that practice is and what it is not.</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">In the next column we have pulled together what we believe to be the best of our thinking so far on what a CRC is.</p>	<p>A CRC is a disciplined group who practice together (mind, Spirit, & body) with being a base community of the Next Christianity. This religious practice is designed for 3-12 persons meeting weekly for at least two hours.</p> <p>A CRC is rooted in Christian practice. By “Christian” we mean a basic loyalty to the history-changing and continuingly transformative event of dying to our illusions and rising to authentic life – an event called forth by Jesus-as-Messiah, retold by word of mouth, and restated in Christian Scriptures and traditions.</p> <p>A CRC is rooted in the specific Christian theological awakening that dates from the philosophical and theological innovations of Søren Kierkegaard; was fleshed out by Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and H. Richard Niebuhr; pulled together by Joseph W. Mathews; and further clarified and updated by the ministries of Realistic Living. We see this as one of many ongoing streams of theological clarification flowing out of Kierkegaard’s awakening. And our own stream continues to take in feminist, ecological, and other edge themes.</p> <p>The CRC group practice uses a nurture design constructed upon the frame of Confession, Celebration, and Dedication with particulars of understanding and practice experimented with by Realistic Living staff, board members, and constituencies for the last 27 years.</p> <p>A CRC is an ongoing experiment in religious innovation made by a whole network of CRCs acting together. As a whole group of CRCs we strive to evolve for ourselves and our descendants a structure of living practice that can become or influence significantly the base community of the Next Christianity.</p>

What Do We Do with the 2 Hours of a Regular CRC Meeting?

The previous description of what a CRC is and what it is not has implications for the specifics of our time together when a CRC meets. While there will be adaptations to each local situation and to the members of each CRC, we are defining here the commonality that we assume for all the CRCs in the CRC network we are envisioning. This commonality has been formed from the explorations of the last 27 years and from the consensus demonstrated and discussed in annual Research Symposium meetings the past ten years.

On the following page is the nurture outline that has been used weekly and in a variety of places. In 2012 we will introduce this nurture practice to a number of new groups and invite them to join in the common practice and the evaluation of this ongoing, creative experimentation. We imagine each Circle sending delegates to an annual Anchor's Colloquy to discuss and make appropriate changes in the common practice.

Here are some of the guidelines assumed in the outline:

1. **The Confession, Celebration, Dedication order of nurture** is an important piece of heritage that we want to emphasize. This includes giving opportunity for all the members to confess their lives, to celebrate their acceptance and their awareness of the Word of Life, and to dedicate their living to being an embodied enactment of the Life we are celebrating.

2. **Spending time with the Christian Scriptures** is also an important part of the common practice. This includes: (a) countering the fundamentalist outlook so prominent in American culture, (b) becoming familiar with the poetry and stories of the Christian heritage, and (3) learning to translate these scriptures metaphorically and culturally and apply their meanings to our own lives. While we acknowledge that the Christian Scriptures are flawed, time-specific witnesses written by human beings, we view them as touching the enduring depths of life.

3. **Effective study**, employing up to 50 minutes per meeting, is a part of this nurture format. This is a counter to the anti-intellectualism in our culture and encourages every member to understand clearly the Christian faith and the world in which that faith is being expressed and lived. We do not understand "faith" to mean an assent to a set of religious beliefs. "Faith" in this practice means trusting Reality and the Word that grasps Reality as indeed forgiving and trustworthy. We seek study content that assists us to make this weekly ritual meaningful and a rehearsal for living in freedom, trust, and compassion.

4. **The importance of the human body** as well as the mind is acknowledged by the dance movement.

5. **Silent contemplation and common oral prayer** are included in simple, yet real ways.

The following Baseline Order of Nurture is our current proposal for how these guidelines can be embodied. We have a training manual that explains the leadership roles for this Order of Nurture.

A Baseline Order of Nurture for the 2012 experimentation in **Christian Resurgence Circle Meetings**

Light Three Candles while singing a verse of song.

Act One: Owing Up to Reality **(The Confession of our Lives)**

Dance (*3 or 4 minutes*)

Silence – end with a Bell (*3 or 4 minutes*)

Song

Spirit-Question Go-Round (*Allow up to 3 minutes per person*)

Absolution

Celebrations of Birthdays and other Significant Events

Act Two: Opening the Mouth of the Infinite Silence **(The Celebration of the Word)**

Translate a portion of the Christian Scriptures into contemporary metaphors and respond to some grounding questions.

(Allow up to 10 minutes)

(Break: optional)

Song

Study an appropriate selection of current theological insight, spirit deepening literature, or ethical thought.

(Allow up to 50 minutes)

Act Three: Committing to Spirit Action **(The Dedication of our Living)**

Song

Prayers of Petition and Intercession (*Allow time for every person to speak.*)

Silence – end with a Bell

Extinguish the Candles while singing a verse of song.

A Ritual for Clarifying and Deepening the CRC Covenanting Process

Include the following ritual at a CRC meeting each quarter.

(A good time for this would be either at the first session of a new quarter or at the evaluation and planning session at the end of a quarter.)

If everyone has a copy, the covenant might be read in unison.

Or a leader says, "Say after me," and then reads aloud each of these lines, waiting for it to be echoed by the whole group:

I will experiment with this practice of base community of the Next Christianity for the next quarter.

I will attend each week unless significant circumstances intervene.

I will come prepared to participate fully.

I will come prepared for any agreed upon leadership assignment.

I will read any agreed upon study assignment.

I will conduct my whole life as an enactment of profound humanness.

I will love in profound humanness each member of this group,
each human being on Earth,
and each species and ecosystem on this planet.

And finally, I will accept my forgiveness for any lack of living up to this covenant.

So be it.

When three people make this covenant, a CRC exists. When three people practice this practice, a fourth and fifth person have something to join.

Defining an Anchor's Colloquy

An Anchors' Colloquy Is Not:	An Anchors' Colloquy Is:
<p>A Training School</p> <p>A Research Assembly or Symposium</p> <p>A Meeting of Potential Anchors</p> <p>Such activities are good, but we need to do a different job with this emerging Structure of the Next Christianity that bears the name "Anchor's Colloquy."</p>	<p>A Colloquy is a representative body of persons each of whom is giving leadership to a local Christian Resurgence Circle.</p> <p>A Colloquy is an ongoing experiment in religious innovation made by the whole network of CRCs acting together. It includes democratic processes that are conducted in the context of a contemporary practice of the Next Christianity.</p> <p>It is assumed that each fully functioning CRC will send delegates to the Anchor's Colloquy.</p> <p>It is assumed that these delegates are able to share the concerns of their group and give the wisdom of their experience to other CRC delegates.</p> <p>It is assumed that the Colloquy will be a deliberative body, making adjustments in the common experiment that the entire Network of CRCs consense is needed.</p> <p>Colloquy delegates may focus attention on the ongoing development in understandings and practices needed for this experiment with CRCs and with a CRC Network.</p> <p>Colloquy delegates may concern themselves with sharing or developing Spirit methods and contexts needed by their CRCs.</p> <p>Colloquy delegates may also discuss the mission to create a Network of Circles and to serve local places and the planet.</p> <p>Colloquy delegates may make requests to CRC Network organizing and training offices for services that are needed by local CRCs.</p>