**3) DISCOVER our Stories: Consciously recognize the power of God’s presence at work within our lived experience, the lives of others, and the stories of the places we live.**

**Questions and Practices for Deeper Reflection:**

1. Share a story of a time you felt God’s presence at work in your life. How do you recognize God’s presence in that story?
2. Share a story about a place in the natural world that is special to you. Why is it special? How do you recognize God’s presence there?
3. Share a story about a time you recognized God’s presence at work in someone else’s life. How did you recognize God’s presence in that story?

**Personal:** We **discover** the power of our own stories, and the ways our stories have been shaped by the land as well as our cultures, economies, religious traditions, political systems, and personal and collective histories.

**Questions and Practices for Deeper Reflection:**

1. Write or share several mini-autobiographies, tracing in broad brushstrokes the impact each of these forces had on your life and your family’s life (note: this is not an exhaustive list by any means, just a place to start):
   1. Lands/geographies in which you have lived
   2. Ethnic/racial cultures you were born into and shaped by
   3. Economic systems
   4. Religious traditions
   5. Political dynamics
   6. Other significant forces particularly relevant to your experience

**Interpersonal:** We **discover** the transformative power of our stories by sharing our stories with others, and inviting others to share their stories with us, paying special attention to peoples and creatures whose stories have been silenced.

**Questions and Practices for Deeper Reflection:**

1. If sharing our stories with one another has transformative power, how might I invite people to share their stories with me?
2. What are the qualities of a good listener? How do I know when someone is really listening to me and hearing what I am saying? What helps me feel empowered and free to share my story with others?
3. Do I practice deep listening and honoring of what others are saying? How do I actively create welcoming situations where others might feel courageous enough to share their stories, and where their stories will be heard and honored?

**Faith Community:** We **discover** common interests and the public dimensions of our stories through organized, focused listening seasons within and between our communities.

**Questions and Practices for Deeper Reflection:**

1. A listening season is a time period (often 6 - 8 weeks) in which a faith community commits to having one-to-ones and group meetings with people for the specific purpose of hearing their stories about the pressures/issues they are struggling with, discovering common themes among the stories, and identifying the public dimensions of those stories in order to act together to help one another and the larger community. Have you ever participated in a focused listening season? What was it like?
2. In your own faith community, what do you imagine are the most prevalent pressures/issues people are dealing with? How might it benefit the community to find out about those pressures from the people themselves?
3. Are their neighboring faith communities, or other organizations, whom you would like to experience this process with? Which ones? Why?

**Public Sphere:** We **discover** our collective power by sharing our stories in the public arena to develop as community leaders and advance human and environmental justice.

**Questions and Practices for Deeper Reflection:**

1. Have you ever been to a public event in which you were moved by the story or testimony of someone on stage? Tell the story of that experience. How did the story change you?
2. In collective public actions, those kind of moving stories are not coming from strangers or celebrities, but from ordinary people, possibly even from your own neighborhood or faith community. Now imagine that the person who shared the story in the previous question was you, or someone you know — someone who had previously felt disempowered and yet found their voice and their power in their story. What feelings are evoked in you?
3. It can sometimes be hard to believe that our personal stories can generate enough collective power to change public policy, for example. What are the negative cultural messages you have heard about people sharing their stories in public? How might organizing our stories using the Practices for Awakening Leadership be different than the cultural messages you hear?