

The Little Booklet of EcoFaith Recovery



The Practices for Awakening Leadership

For the Recovery of Human Life
and the Healing of God's Creation

*“The most common way people give up their power
is by thinking they don’t have any.”*

- Alice Walker

We are EcoFaith Recovery...

We are a broad network of volunteer leaders and faith-based communities in the Pacific Northwest who are:

- *recovering* our true vocation as people of faith and citizens of earth;
- *restoring* our sanity in the midst of an addictive culture and economy;
- *reconciling* a right-relationship with all of creation, including human and non-human communities;
- *rediscovering* courage to rise up with the most vulnerable and oppressed in the face of systems that escalate injustice and climate chaos;
- *reclaiming* our prophetic imagination for the flourishing of an earth-honoring and life-honoring faith, economy, and culture.

We are EcoFaith Recovery.

And we are recovering.

We welcome you to learn more about our approach to recovery through the pages of this booklet. Then, if it seems right to you, we hope you will join us.

Our Purpose is to...

- + identify existing and emerging leaders,
- + develop our leadership potential through EcoFaith's *Practices for Awakening Leadership*, and
- + lift one another up to support our faith communities in taking courageous public action for the recovery of human life and the healing of God's creation.

Our Name...

EcoFaith Recovery arose at the confluence of three rivers of wisdom:

- 1) **ecology**,
- 2) earth-honoring Christian **faith**, with an openness to learning from other spiritual traditions, as well, and
- 3) various “**recovery**” movements, especially
 - ♦ personal 12 step recovery groups,
 - ♦ community anti-oppression trainings, and
 - ♦ grassroots community organizing for the recovery of our institutions

From the confluence of these rivers we draw the *Practices for Awakening Leadership* and go into “ecofaith recovery” together.

Common Characteristics among those of us engaged in EcoFaith Recovery

Like millions around the world who have sought recovery from the destructive effects of growing up in addictive and dysfunctional systems, we in EcoFaith Recovery discovered that we also had many experiences in common from living in a society addicted to an unsustainable way of life. While understanding that not all of these characteristics describe all of us, many of us experienced the following:

- We found that we were not spiritually grounded, that our current institutional faith practices were not sufficiently rooting us to weather the storms (ecological, economic, social, political and spiritual) of climate change and ecological degradation.
- We often felt overwhelmed by the incessant bad news, finding ourselves either compulsively acting to “fix” the problem or “checking out” emotionally.
- We sought ways to get involved in actions or activities of our congregations and local organizations, but sometimes left these experiences and meetings feeling more isolated than when we came.
- We found ourselves exhausted and “burned out” by actions and activities, even and especially from those that were for a “good cause.”

- We kept our feelings of grief, fear and anger inside for lack of a community that could hold and honor the emotional impact that climate change and ecological degradation were having on us.
- We found that we were unconsciously allowing fear of disapproval to keep us from taking risks for the sake of our own development and for the healing of creation.
- We struggled but failed to find words to explain why taking action for the healing of God's creation and justice for those disproportionately harmed by ecological degradation was deeply important to us, thus increasing our isolation and feeling of being overwhelmed.
- We believed that we had no unique gifts to offer to the movements for the healing of creation and justice for human communities, that we were not leaders unless we were prepared to stand up and lead a big group.
- We believed that we had no story, that we had no wisdom, that we had no power, that we were fundamentally victims of a system rather than actors within it.

**In response to experiences like these, we are
coming together and engaging in the
Practices for Awakening Leadership.**

**In the process, we are recovering our true vocation as
people of faith and citizens of earth.**

We welcome you to join us!

Purpose & Nature of this Recovery Work

EcoFaith Recovery is a spiritual recovery movement for people of faith and others who care to join us. Together we acknowledge our participation in and powerlessness over our dominant culture's addiction to unjust and unsustainable ways of life. We seek recovery to a higher power, an indwelling God who equips us to take appropriate action for the recovery of human life and the healing of God's creation.

Seeking Right-relationship to God and God's Power

We believe that a God of Love is always at work within the world pursuing a wholistic flourishing of life characterized by justice, peace and the integrity of creation. This is the Biblical vision of Shalom. God calls us to participate in the life giving power of love in order to embody Shalom in every dimension of our lives: personal, interpersonal, community and the public arena. The more fully we participate in this great work of love with God, the more our cultural, economic, religious, and political institutions embody God's desire for creation.

A Choice Between Powers

Of course there is more than one kind of power at work in the world. Power is frequently defined as "the ability to act or produce an effect." We exercise power in complex and often unexamined ways through the choices we make and the ways those choices directly or indirectly impact others. We experience and participate in both life-giving and destructive forms of power every day across every dimension of our lives.

Destructive Power

Destructive power may manifest as injustice, violence and the degradation of life. Our dominant culture's compulsion towards unsustainable and unjust ways of life wreaks havoc upon us as individuals, families, and communities. It is equally destructive in the public sphere where it pervades our cultural, economic, religious, and political institutions, such as our schools, corporations, faith communities, and governmental organizations.

We participate in destructive power in ways that are not fully conscious to us or through processes that seem to be far beyond our control. For example, we exercise destructive power as we...

- continue to extract and burn fossil fuels within a climate that is already in peril,
- unknowingly use resources that destroy habitats or foster unjust work environments, and
- permit our economic and political institutions to produce toxic waste and then dump it on the land of indigenous, ethnic minority and low income human communities that lack sufficient power to oppose such choices.

Destructive power often benefits those who have access to greater power and resources while inflicting disproportionate harm on the most vulnerable and oppressed human and nonhuman members of God's creation. When we uncritically participate in these destructive systems of power and unconsciously replicate them in our families, faith communities, and other institutions, the devastation to our lives, the lives of future generations, and everything God loves escalates. But when we claim the power God gives us to stand in service of Shalom, then destructive power is restrained and what has been devastated begins to heal.

Recovering the Life-giving Power of Leadership

We take the first step toward recovering the right use of power when we acknowledge our powerlessness over our culture's addiction to an unsustainable way of life. But also realizing our complicity in this addictive process, we humbly ask God to realign our lives with God's right use of power so we can awaken to a healthy understanding of ourselves as *leaders* in recovery.

We recognize that most of us are already leaders, even when we are engaged in simply leading by example. To become more conscious of the kind of leadership we are already offering and enhance our capacity to make a difference, we engage in seven ***Practices for Awakening Leadership***.

These ***Practices*** include

- 1) ACCESS Spiritual Power,
- 2) DEVELOP Relationships,
- 3) DISCOVER our Stories,
- 4) MENTOR One Another,
- 5) ACT Together,
- 6) REFLECT on our Actions, and
- 7) RESTORE Balance.

As we engage in these *Practices* within the personal, interpersonal, community, and public arenas of our lives, we begin to recover and reclaim a responsible use of power. God realigns our lives with the divine power of love at work in creation and works through us to inspire action in service of Shalom. We offer more spiritually grounded, relational leadership to our faith communities, other communities and public institutions, inspiring them to take courageous public action together for the recovery of human life and the healing of God's creation. As we engage these *Practices*, we find that God expands our capacity to make costly sacrifices to bring about a greater flourishing of the good life God intends for all. We participate in this sacrificial love in service of Shalom when, for example, we...

- choose sustainably-made goods produced with just labor practices,

- lobby for legislation which reduces community energy consumption in ways that do not cause additional harm to the economically vulnerable, and
- risk our personal privilege by renouncing violence and standing in solidarity with marginalized communities on the front lines of ecological degradation and related injustices, partnering with them to work for nonviolent social change.

Daily Work Done Together With Others

Through daily engagement with the *Practices for Awakening Leadership*, we go into “ecofaith recovery” together. We have found that such counter-cultural recovery work is only possible with the support of and accountability to others who are also engaged in this work. Only in this way can we daily recover to right relationship with God, one another, oppressed communities, the land and its indigenous peoples, our local watersheds, and the whole of God’s creation. We seek progress and not perfection, recognizing that this is urgent yet life-long work.

As we recover, we learn to exercise leadership that is more faithful, humble, creative, and courageous. We support our congregations as well as our other communities in recovering the power to offer public witness to our faith. We re-claim a vision of congregations and other public institutions as capable of taking action for justice that promotes the diverse flourishing of life throughout creation. As we do all of this, our indwelling God renews our sense of hope, nurtures a healthy sense of leadership in us, and restores our capacity to make a difference for the recovery of human life and the healing of God’s creation.



The Practices for Awakening Leadership

The following pages describe *the Practices* through which we enter into “ecofaith recovery” together.

1) ACCESS Spiritual Power:

Consciously connect with the indwelling God to rediscover our belovedness, our God-given power, and our place within God's evolving universe.

Personal: We *acknowledge* and name the destructive powers we experience in our lives, and seek the God of love, whose life-giving power is **accessible** through our embodied experience in creation.

Interpersonal: We *acknowledge* the ways we isolate ourselves and objectify others, and instead **access** the power of love by awakening to God's indwelling presence in the people and other members of creation we encounter.

Community: We *acknowledge* the ways we have allowed our Scriptures and traditions to be misused as weapons against many, and instead **access** the power of the God of love to reclaim the rituals and resources of our faiths to honor human dignity and the integrity of creation.

Public Sphere: We *acknowledge* our collective failures in acting for justice, and instead **access** the power of the indwelling God of love, who works through public efforts to advance human and environmental justice.



2) Develop Relationships:

Consciously awaken the power-among that arises when we engage in authentic conversation and relationship.

Personal: We **develop** a compassionate relationship with our powerful yet limited selves as beloved by the indwelling God, and deeply connected to all other powerful yet limited beings.

Interpersonal: We **develop** relationships with other peoples, lands, and creatures, discovering our respective interests, and seeking to see the world from other points of view.

Community: We disrupt the culture of isolation by **developing** relational cultures within and among diverse human communities, and between those communities and the natural world.

Public Sphere: We develop relationships of accountability between diverse human communities and public leaders, for the sake of restoring public commitment to the common good and the community of creation.



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.

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.

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.

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

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.



4) MENTOR One Another:

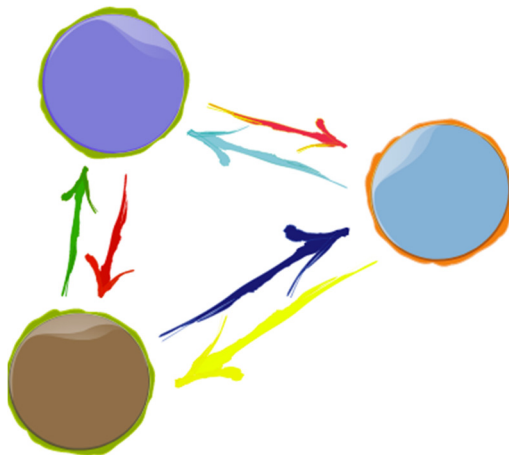
Consciously draw out the gifts, wisdom and life-giving power of others, and share our own, by mentoring and being mentored.

Personal: Recognizing the deeply relational nature of the universe, we acknowledge our need for **mentors** from the whole community of creation for the sake of our own development as leaders.

Interpersonal: We are **mentored** by and **mentor** others, naming the gifts we recognize in one another, and inviting and extending constructive feedback for the sake of our mutual leadership development.

Community: We seek to develop **mentoring** relationships and a culture of mutual-**mentoring** within all of our communities.

Public Sphere: We seek out experienced leaders of public actions to mentor, challenge and teach us as we learn to express our power in the public arena.



5) ACT Together:

Consciously engage the power of collective action, in the service of God’s healing and justice-seeking work for human communities and the whole creation.

Personal: We discern our unique call to participate with others in organized **actions**, for the sake of mending the brokenness in our communities, and restoring our connection to the places we live.

Interpersonal: As we recognize our deep interconnectedness with earth and diverse human communities, we identify our mutual interests, and we invite those close to us to join us in **acting** on those common interests.

Community: We nurture relational cultures, identifying common interests and public issues affecting our communities, so that we are ready to **act** together to promote justice and healing for the whole community of creation.

Public Sphere: We join or develop community organizing efforts, through which we identify mutual interests, research issues, conduct power analyses and **act** together to promote greater justice for human communities and the community of creation.



6) REFLECT on our Actions:

Consciously reflect upon and evaluate our actions and the ways we use power, in order to learn and grow into mature and courageous leaders.

Personal: We evaluate our actions and the ways we use or experience power, integrating what each experience has to teach us, by regularly **reflecting**, praying, and/or spending time in conscious relationship with the natural world.

Interpersonal: We **reflect** with others on our actions, as well as our experience and use of power, gaining wisdom from diverse perspectives, and learning from one another.

Community: We create a culture of **reflection** and evaluation within our communities, regularly assessing power dynamics, and learning from our gatherings and actions, in order to mature as leaders and communities.

Public Sphere: We collectively **reflect** on and evaluate the power dynamics of all public actions, including their impact on relationship development, leadership capacity, public systems, marginalized communities and the natural world.



7) **RESTORE Balance**: Consciously re-align our lives with the sacred and natural rhythms of Life expressed through the whole of God's creation.

Personal: We **restore** our bodies and spirits, practicing Sabbath and regaining a balance of work and rest, as modeled in Scripture and creation.

Interpersonal: We receive and offer support to one another as we seek to practice healthy rhythms and **restore** balance in our lives.

Community: We incorporate Sabbath practices into the culture of our communities, honoring the limits of both human and earth's capacity, and our need for **restoration**.

Public Sphere: We intentionally practice healthy cycles of public engagement, participating in organized actions while also taking time to celebrate, grieve, and **restore** our energy, in keeping with the Sabbath rhythms of the God of creation.



How can our group, team or congregation engage in these Practices for Awakening Leadership?

There is no single or right way to engage the *Practices for Awakening Leadership*. You are most welcome to participate in an EcoFaith Recovery Initiative to gain experience with the *Practices*. Whenever you are ready, you can bring them back home to your faith community. Because experience has shown that we recover more fully when practicing within a community of support, we encourage you to find two or more others, or any existing group in your faith community. These may be people who have a fairly clear sense of the difference they would like to make together or a group that simply knows they want mutual support in speaking up and taking action in response to their faith. Then just set a time to meet and start!

Possible ways to practice together include:

- Working with one of the seven categories each month. Try engaging one sub-practice per week for four or five weeks. (A sample meeting format is on the next page, and additional formats can be found on the website.) This would enable you to move through all seven categories twice every year;
- Beginning (or ending) a meal or a meeting by engaging in any single practice;
- Engaging a different practice as a family at the beginning or ending of each day;
- Bringing a team of one or two fellow leaders to a gathering of one of EcoFaith's various Initiatives where you can learn how to engage these practices more deeply in your life and with any group.

Examples for Incorporating the *Practices for Awakening Leadership* into your Gatherings/Meetings

- 1) **ACCESS Spiritual Power:** At the beginning of a meeting, draw on an earth-honoring song, prayer, poem, or practice to access spiritual power. At the end of a meeting, pray for spiritual power for one another, the group's collective work, and any upcoming actions.
- 2) **DEVELOP Relationships:** Engage in one-to-one conversations (15 - 20 minutes) on a topic of significance to the content of the meeting, or simply, "What is your deep interest in participating in the work we are doing together?"
- 3) **DISCOVER our Stories:** One person shares with the whole group how the content of the meeting relates to their own life and life story.
- 4) **MENTOR one Another:** Group members give and receive constructive feedback, share what they see and hear in others' stories, or share the wisdom of their lived experience with one another.
- 5) **ACT Together:** The group holds one another lovingly accountable for prior commitments made to accomplish collective goals, and plans next steps in collective action, making commitments for following through on those next steps.
- 6) **REFLECT on our Actions:** At the end of each meeting, the group reflects collectively on the meeting itself (What went well? What didn't? What did we discover?) and offers constructive feedback for leaders and participants to develop our leadership skills.
- 7) **RESTORE Balance:** Share how we are intending to rest and nourish ourselves in the coming week (connecting with nature, fun, celebration, retreat, etc.).

Will you help share this with others?

Has this approach to recovery been helpful to you? Do you see its potential to benefit others? If so, please consider joining us by:

- 1) **Sharing the *Practices for Awakening Leadership*** with another individual, a team, a group of interested people, or congregation so the power of communities grounded in earth, faith, justice, and hope can grow.
- 2) **Sharing video, audio or written examples of how you and your community are engaging in each of the *Practices for Awakening Leadership***, so we can post them on the website to share with others.
- 3) **Writing your story** describing the difference the *Practices for Awakening Leadership* have made in your life and the life of your faith community, so your story can be shared through the website and publications like this one.
- 4) **Making a monthly contribution or any financial gift** that will enable us to expand this effort to benefit more people and more communities who may need them. EcoFaith Recovery depends on the contributions of people like you who share this vision for the recovery of human life and healing of God's creation. Please donate through the website or via the address below.
- 5) **Inviting your congregation and/or others** to support and fund this effort.

Please contribute your examples, stories, and financial gifts to:

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