Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God’s Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves.

The faith practice of blessing and letting go invites Jesus’ followers of all ages to welcome the implications of living in a world of constant transition. This practice supports the ongoing, natural cycle of blessing and letting go, of embracing and releasing. It is a lifelong, hope-infused journey whose rhythm is grounded in God’s eternal love, grace, and mercy. Mere words belie the complexity of this rhythm. At times it leads to excruciating pain, at times to joyous expectation. Sometimes segments of this journey are long and arduous, sometimes brief and joyful. In all circumstances, the freedom to bless and to let go are gifts from God—gifts that we can extend to one another. The activities in this resource for Blessing and Letting Go seek to shape this discipline of Christian life by engaging various aspects of this moving dance of grief, release, prayer, thanksgiving, and living anew.

Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

Let’s Begin…

Now that you’ve downloaded the files for your faith practice and age group or setting, you can get started planning one or multiple sessions:

1. Open the .pdf file for your age group or setting. Choose an Exploration, the approach you think will help your group to best experience the faith practice. Choose any one of the following Explorations to use for one session:

   - Discovery
   - Scripture
   - Discipleship
   - Christian Tradition
   - Context and Mission
   - Future and Vision

   **Note:** If you’re planning multiple sessions, you can follow the order suggested above or feel free to use any order that fits the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to start with Scripture and then see where that leads them. Others may be more ready to act in their community and might want to start with Context and Mission.

2. Locate the Exploration you’ve chosen
Blessing and Letting Go

1. Look through all 9 activities and select the ones you would like to do with your group.
   - If you're planning a 30–45 minute session, choose 3 activities.
   - It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving.
   - For 45 minutes to 1 hour, choose 4 or 5 activities.
   - For a 1½ to 2-hour session, you can use all 9 activities.

Tip: Look for this symbol 🂓 to find activities designed for Easy Preparation (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

2. Make copies of any handouts (📚) related to your activities. Order posters (🖼), if using art (see “Ordering Posters,” below).

Use of Art, Music, and Scripture in Faith Practices

Faith Practices activities include many opportunities to grow in faith through the use of scripture, music, and art.

Ordering Posters
If you choose activities that use an art image, you or your church will need to purchase posters of the art by clicking on the link provided in the activity. If you wish to use art, you will need to plan ahead, since it takes 1 to 2 weeks for the posters to arrive after you place your order.

Art
Six posters are used with the faith practice Blessing and Letting Go and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets
“Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard
https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401

“The Baptism of Jesus,” by Pheoris West
https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1725021198?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37961&store_id=1401

“Christ Among the Children,” by Emil Nolde
https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1725021198?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37961&store_id=1401

From Art.com
“St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds,” by Giotto di Bondone
http://www.art.com/products/p11724653-sa-i1350212/giotto-di-bondone-st-francis-of-assisi-preaching-to-the-birds.htm?sort=cat&sortid=0&dimvals=0&ui=b2c89647ba56409d894161743bb14f5d&searchstring=st.+francis+feeding+the+birds

“Christina’s World, 1948,” by Andrew Wyeth
http://www.art.com/products/p10041656-sa-i783641/andrew-wyeth-christinas-world-1948.htm?sort=cat&sortid=0&dimvals=0&ui=0f6ded272c5f442f8f4b43201f2adbf&searchstring=christina%27s+world
Blessing and Letting Go

“Forgiveness,” by Thierry Ona
http://www.art.com/products/p12191417-sa-i2792541/thierry-ona-forgiveness.htm?orig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=6c47c0957fbd4b65a64ba2cbe037088f&searchstring=forgiveness

Music
Three music selections are used with Blessing and Letting Go. A web link is provided to give more information about each music selection.

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing” Jaroslav J. Vajda (tune: Ar Hyd Y Nos)
http://rockhay.tripod.com/worship/music/gomychild.htm

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower,” by Natalie Sleeth (tune: Promise)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkWYubdnc7o
http://www.hymnary.org/text/in_a_bulb_there_is_a_flower

“Shalom Chaverim,” Traditional Hebrew blessing (tune: Shalom)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2pm6XGvnnnc
http://www.musickit.com/resources/shalomchaver.html

Scripture
Twelve Bible passages are used with Blessing and Letting Go, two with each Exploration.

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<tr>
<th>Discovery</th>
<th>1 Samuel 16:1-23</th>
<th>Ephesians 3:14-20</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Genesis 12:1-5</td>
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Writing Team for Blessing and Letting Go

Ted Huffman
Worship, Music, Arts, and Story

Sam Collins
Adults

Martha Brunell
Seekers and New Church Participants

Lori Schroeder
Young Adults

Brett Carter
Older Youth

Carol Duerkson
Youth

Sharon Harding
Older Children

Donna Hanby
Young Children

Mary Nelson Keithahn
Multiage and Intergenerational

Sandi Marr
Living Practices in Daily Life

Susan Chesley
Workshop Rotation

David Ackerman
United Church of Christ Identity and History

Rebeca Grothe
Editor

Patrice L. Rosner
Managing Editor