

April 6, 2021

Extra Resources and Questions for *Dream of God*

The Very Rev. Robyn Szoke-Coolidge, Dean, the Stevenson School for Ministry
Mary Novello, Vice President, Commission on Ministry, Episcopal Diocese of Central
Pennsylvania

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Introduction to our program: For the last 3 years, the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania's Commission On Ministry has been working to widen its focus from ordained ministry to the ministry of all baptized people. Although the importance of baptismal ministry is clearly spelled out in the Book of Common Prayer, we discovered that, as a diocese, we all had a lot to learn. The COVID pandemic provided us with an opportunity to explore online learning open to the entire diocese. Using Facebook Live Streaming, with Zoom linked hosts and occasional prerecorded video, we hoped to reach as many people as possible to take a deep dive into Verna Dozier's **The Dream of God**, a down-to-earth approach exhorting lay people to claim their authority, their ministry, and get busy restoring the Dream of God.

What we did:

Purpose:

1. A conversational approach with different lay leadership for each of the questions
2. Reaching a broad audience who will have the opportunity to post questions and comments
3. Lay leadership empowerment through inspiring stories and reflections on The Dream of God.

Resources: The Dream of God by Verna Dozier and Excerpts From: Richard E. Brewer. "EfM Vol A: 2017-18 Living Faithfully in Your World." Apple Books.

Promotion: This is what we published on our diocesan website, newsletter, and Facebook page.

In **The Dream of God: A Call to Return**, theologian and Christian educator Verna Dozier describes God's dream is a world where all live together in peace and harmony and fulfillment. This is the world that God created, including humankind. Out of love, God created humans with free will. Again and again, we have used that free will to reject God's love, with devastating consequences, not only for ourselves, but for all of Creation. Yet, again and again, God reaches out to us, inviting us to return and to restore the broken dream.

Deepen your journey with Christ this season of Epiphany

April 6, 2021

What difference does it make that you believe? Join us on Facebook live for an opportunity to engage Verna Dozier's book, *The Dream of God: A Call to Return* to re-connect and re-awaken your sense of call as well as rediscover your discipleship. In *The Dream of God: A Call to Return*, theologian and Christian educator Dr. Verna Dozier defines ministry as "service in response to the dream of God, the restoration of the good creation that God brought into being at the beginning and that 'groans in travail,' as Paul put it, for the people of God to wake up to the reason why they are called." Wednesday evenings, Jan 20, 27. Feb3, Feb 10 at 7PM, offered by the Commission on Ministry

Objectives:

1. Begin to build a common frame of reference and common theological language regarding discernment and ministry with COM members and Diocese as a whole
2. Start a conversation about Baptismal Ministry
3. Interest others in exploring discernment for ministry in its fullest sense (all orders of ministry)
4. Support **Shaped by Faith** (a diocesan initiative for congregations to explore, discover, reshape themselves in response to living God's mission) efforts, by building a system where we are living out our Catechism (all orders of ministry), and our Baptismal Vows (all being called to ministry) Why? We are all called to ministry through Baptism, yet few of us have the tools to explore what God is calling us to be and to do.
5. Why now? Epiphany is the time to "make known" through exploration and discovery. With COVID restrictions keeping many of us at home and inviting us to connect with each other in new ways, perhaps there is no better time to shed some light on the murkiness of call and explore it for one hour per week. Epiphany is a perfect time because it is the season to reflect more deeply on the life changing "ah ha-s" of God in our life, in the church and in the world around us.

Target audience:

Especially designed for lay people who want to explore lay ministry. Open to everyone. (Commission On Ministry members will have read the book in advance) Dr. Dozier defines ministry as "service in response to the dream of God, the restoration of the good creation that God brought into being at the beginning and that 'groans in travail,' as Paul put it, for the people of God to wake up to the reason why they are called."

Call to action:

We all are called to ministry/vocation, the conjunction of our deep gladness and the world's need (paraphrase of Buechner). We provided information about Education for Ministry and other lay formation/ministry opportunities in the Zoom chat, and as Facebook comments.

Session Questions:

Overall Refrain: What does this mean for your ministry?

Week 1: Do you want to follow Jesus or are you content just to worship him? (p. 143) quote. Panelists: Drew Dorgan, Standing Committee Chair, Mary Novello, COM VP, Bishop Audrey Scanlan

Week 2: The important question to ask is not, 'What do you believe?' but 'What difference does it make that you believe?' (p. 105) (Lay Licensing?) Panelists: Kathy Hettinga, Christyan Seay, Mary, Bishop Scanlan

Week 3: Does the world come nearer to the dream of God because of what you believe? "I didn't decide to join the Episcopal Church. I was invited by a young priest who was really turning a fairly old, established, dying Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill on its ear, changing everything they had ever known and ever done and was intensely disliked. And one of the radical things he decided was that it was time for the Episcopal Church to have a black member. I did not know that that's what he had decided." (Quote from ENS interview) Panelists: Sr. Ingrid Andersen, CFC, Mary and the Bishop.

Week 4: The dream of God is that all creation will live together in peace and harmony and fulfillment. All parts of creation. And the dream of God is that the good creation that God created – what the refrain says, 'and God saw that it was good' – be restored. Panelists: Kevin Barron, to be ordained a transitional deacon this month, Mary, and the Bishop

What we learned:

Using a multimedia, diocesan-wide approach reached a surprising number of people. (ask Faith for numbers) which we will be continuing with several topic areas. We also learned the relevancy of the Dream of God for lay ministry today, and the questions that emerged allowed for a depth of storytelling that enabled laity to name their calling from God.

What we suggest:

Possible Questions to Explore by Chapter:

Chapter 1

From your understanding of Scripture how would you describe the dream of God? In the dream of God, what are people called to?

Why do you believe people reject the dream of God?

Reflect and share how you read the Bible and what the Biblical passages and stories mean to you

Chapter 2

The act of Creation is a love story in which the lover (God) seeks the beloved (us) in a way in which God is made vulnerable and is painted as "lonely". *How do you respond to the idea of a vulnerable, lonely God?*

God creates humankind as "free." *How does your freedom play into your relationship with God? How have you rejected or lived into God's idea of a "friendly world or friendly folk under a friendly sky?" How does this differ from the popular idea that "God has a plan for your life?"*

God's dream is of a restored world in which God's people live in a covenant relationship with God. We see the cycle of wandering, sin, wailing, repentance, restoration, wandering, sin, wailing, repentance.... *Where do you think we are right now, as a people, as a country?*

Jesus' life and ministry is shared in scripture in four different gospel accounts (the various vantages are described on pp.36, 37). *Which one resonates most with you?*

Chapter 3

The sovereignty of the reign of God, the kingdom of God-are theological symbols for a possibility to be realized, a possibility never realized. It is realized eschatology: the kingdom is here; the kingdom is still to come. It is a faith statement about the dream of God. *How does the ministries you are involved in or your congregations are involved in reveal the dream of God?*

The church is first of all a people called to live out this statement. Jesus infused his followers with his spirit that even when he died, they knew he lived. That movement swept on in power until it could no longer trust in the uncertainty of God. *Where do you see the church engaging in the uncertainty of God and in tension with the institutional church?*

Chapter 4

Jesus called people to follow him, not worship him. We worship God. *What difference does it make that you believe?*

What does the church do with Jesus? Living in the power of The Kingdom come, rather than living in an expectation of a beyond time event. Jesus is both the present and the future.

Why does the church turn Jesus into a miracle to be revered, rather than following Jesus who took action during the temptations where He rejects the temptation to carry out his mission by miracle (turning stones into bread) and by exercise of power (responding to the kingdoms of this world? What does it mean to follow Jesus or join the Jesus Movement?

Jesus was lifted up by God, after He died, which gave Him a new kind of life, where He could be present to any disciple anywhere. *The question is not what happened in the Tomb but “what is God about to do?”*

Ray Brown, in **The Churches The Apostles Left Behind**, states “the great anomaly of Christianity is that only through an institution can the message of a non-institutional Jesus be preserved”. *How do you believe the message of Jesus is not being altered to fit the needs of the institution? Or, how do you believe the message of Jesus is being altered to fit the needs of the institution?*

Respond to the quote from William Clebsch, one of the young radicals who founded the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin Texas. He warned that “faith in order to be incarnate must risk becoming a religion, but religion is always in danger of murdering faith.”

What have we not listened to in the Bible? What needs our attention for now?

Chapter 5

The genius of Christianity is the vision of a new possibility for human life rooted in an ancient understanding of God that Jesus articulated. *Where have we rejected the Dream of God? Or The kingdom of God?*

Baptism is to show the world what it means to live in the Kingdom of God, to live out God’s dream. Not absolutizing good deeds, there is one absolute and that is God. Jesus resisted power in the service of anyone other than God. The temptation to do good deeds and to exercise power in the temptation is to profit from being religious. *How does the present church profit from being religious? And what would it look like if only God was being served? Do we struggle to save the institution or to live the life from the kingdom of God, the Church gathered, the church scattered?*

The third temptation of Jesus in the wilderness was at the church, the pinnacle of the temple, confronting the Kingdoms of the world. “There is no place that the kingdom of God should not be, and wherever they are ...they are called to witness to

another possibility for life..." *Do you want to follow Jesus or are you content just to worship him?*

The church as the servant of the people of God is found in the mission of the people of God who must talk about reconciliation and witness to another way or a new vision of the human condition, this is the ministry of the laity. *What does this mean for your ministry?*

Possible multimedia resources:

From the Diocese of Central PA: Lay people talking about their ministries in response to the questions

Dream of God Zoom/Facebook Live Interview:

Drew Dorgan (d.dorgan@globalhma.com)

Kathy Hettinga (hettinga@messiah.edu)

Christyan Seay (seayct518@verizon.net)

Sr. Ingrid Andersen (ingrid.andersen1@gmail.com)

Kevin Barron (kevinwbarron@gmail.com)

Shared Vision Retreat Interview:

Kathy Hettinga and Elena Bartlett (kbart8@verizon.net) respond to "Has there been a time when you felt that spark of God and thought, I feel compelled to do this?" Was it part of your work or part of your church life? Were there barriers or hurdles to clear to be able to pursue this spark? Thinking about how you live into discovering your relationship with God, were/are there places you wanted to go but it seems like there were tensions that would stop you from living that out? Interviewer, videographer and editor: The Rev. Barbara Hutchinson. Link to the 10 min version of an hour interview:

<https://youtu.be/45z6azD4m6o>

Intro to Verna Dozier – an online search

- KD Johnson: Learning about Verna Dozier to be inspired:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9UFxGJgtwY>
- Verna Dozier video clip about dominion
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0giAg2qP9mY>

Dream of God Study Guide information

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- St. Michael and All Angel's, Dallas: **My Story** series about Dozier: how are we living out our story in every day life
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlj01j1335w
- Frederica Thomestt on Verna Dozier, after dinner speech at EfM Retreat:
<https://www.facebook.com/Education.for.Ministry/videos/1569717103041338>. At 19:06 - An exercise Dr. Dozier gave at a College of Preachers program. Summary: Tell the story of the Bible in 1 paragraph. Well known preachers struggled with it. She did it in 5 words: Created, Chosen, Sent, Forgiven, and Pursued
- Biola - Christian Educators - Dozier by Thompsett:
<https://www.biola.edu/talbot/ce20/database/verna-josephine-dozier>
- Episcopal Church Leadership Gallery:
<https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/leadership/lay/dozier>