

## ***Pastors Reflections***

*by Jeffrey Frantz*

One of the programs of the **God Is Still Speaking** Ministry Team has been ***Living the Questions***, a 21-week DVD small group study which holds wonderful possibilities for theological and biblical growth, as well as faith transformation along the way. In the months ahead, our church will be offering ***Living the Questions*** experiences—on Sundays after worship and during the weeks. Stay tuned!

**What's *Living the Questions* all about?** *Living the Questions* is a wonderful opportunity for anyone in our church family to explore together the deeper meanings of our Christian faith. The format for each session is: A twenty minute DVD, guided discussion, spiritual exercises and Bible Study.

To begin with, the DVD video presentations are outstanding, featuring outstanding biblical scholars, theologians, along with local church pastors and lay persons. Their insights, promptings and reflections stimulate and excite.

Couple this with the discussion time, which evokes a close study of relevant scriptures that relate to the particular topic, and you have the ingredients for a dynamic, growing experience.

*Living the Questions* is not as concerned with answers as it is questions. We all have our doubts, our lingering sense of mystery and uncertainty about which we wonder and muse. That's normal, even healthy.

Indeed, what is God's overarching passion in the biblical texts? And how does that relate to our lives and these challenging times in which we live?

**Letting the Bible breathe.** *Living the Questions* believes in taking the Bible seriously and to take it seriously is to *not* take it literally. The way we read the Bible—literally (as if every word were the actual word of God, forever and ever ... absolutely infallible) or contextually (in light of the historical context) is at the root of the huge divide that befalls the Church in modern times.

Conservative evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, who interpret the Bible literally, draw conclusions from such a narrow reading of the biblical texts that pose serious problems for open, inclusive visions of the church and community life. Under such a closed reading, the Bible cannot breathe. It cannot speak from the depths of its metaphorical insight and wisdom.

The Bible abundantly overflows with teachings and blessings for us moderns, but it needs to be able to breathe so the richness of its stories can inform and guide our living.

**God and Jesus.** In the *Living the Questions* series, over time, we'll be able to explore the mystery of God, the One who is totally other, who set the earth on its course and

called the world into being; the One who claimed Jesus' own life, death and resurrection as God's own life. The implications, here, are enormous.

The God of *Living the Questions* is not a static God. It is God in the unending process of unfolding and evolving. Indeed, the God Is Still Speaking emphasis in our *United Church of Christ* denomination embodies this same notion: that God *is* still speaking, still revealing God's self to the world, shedding still more of God's grace and wisdom into our human experience.

And what about Jesus? A Jewish mystic, a man whose experiences of God led him into the depths of human/divine love and, therefore, to the peaks of empathy and compassion for peace with justice for every person he met.

Who was this Jesus? What was/is the meaning of his suffering, death and resurrection? What does the best of Christianity have to say to our modern experience, as we wrestle with wars on two fronts and acrimonious debate over national health care reform and a whole host of other issues?

Stay tuned for *Living the Questions* times and places in the months ahead.