



*Wherever You Are, We'll Meet You There*

**New to the role of facilitator?** Here are a few tips to help you get started.

- First of all, a facilitator's job is to coordinate the flow of each session. View the video segment ahead of time and make your own notes and observations.
- Prepare the meeting place so that it is comfortable. Arrive early; help organize any refreshments and test your video player/computer.
- Getting to know one another helps the discussions flow. Welcome all, catch up and reflect a bit on last week's session in the first few minutes.
- You don't have to be the expert. You are not expected to provide answers to questions provided. So let the questions ignite the conversation and see where it takes the group.
- It's everyone's responsibility to make sure everyone else gets an equal amount of time to talk.
- Listen first; evaluate later. Make sure you understand a comment, then ask questions or pose other options.
- Encourage participants to bring a Bible or other resources.
- If you feel so moved, start, and/or end your session in prayer.

## *Leaders Guide*

### **"Gifts of the Darkwood"**

Have you failed recently? Do you feel lost, or like the road ahead is unclear? Are you ever tempted? Do you find any part of your life exhausting? Do you feel out of place among your peers, or society at large?

Based on themes explored in host Eric Elne's forthcoming book, "Gifts of the Dark Wood" series explores the proposition that our best help on life's journey often comes from the most unlikely and misunderstood of places: a place known famously, or infamously, as the Dark Wood.

### **Welcome to the Darkwood Brew journey!**

We are glad you can join us. Our primary resources for small group study are condensed versions of Darkwood Brew's weekly one-hour episodes. These are called GUIDED EPISODES. Each Guided Episode is 25-30 minutes in length. There are pause points with questions provided for each Episode, intended for group discussion or individual reflection. Episode 1, "Where we Find Ourselves," is an introduction to the series that bridges the book/video content and is best suited for leader review and not for small group usage.

On the following page, you will find information on the Series Topic, Skype Guests, Scripture passage, and Questions posed during the episode.



## EPISODE TITLE: “The Gift of Uncertainty”

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 2

### Featured Guest: Brian McLaren

Brian D. McLaren is an author, speaker, activist, and networker among innovative Christian leaders. His dozen-plus books include *A New Kind of Christianity*, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, *Naked Spirituality*, and *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?* He and his wife, Grace, live in Florida and have four adult children and four grandchildren. He’s an avid wildlife and outdoors enthusiast. His newest book, *We Make the Road by Walking*, is available now.

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13: 8-13

8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup>For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup>but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

### Questions:

1. Eric suggests that, though it may seem counter-intuitive, uncertainty may work as a gift in our lives. Do you think that is possible? How do uncertain circumstances make you feel?
2. What does it mean when Brian suggests that doubts might be employed by thoughtful people to dig up hardened ground?
3. Why do you think God is so often revealed in ways that are far more mysterious than concrete?
4. What stood out for you from 1 Corinthians 13: 8-13? What do these verses have to say about uncertainty?
- 5 What do you think of Brian’s suggestion that trust can be found in the space between simplified certainty and overwhelming complexity? How does trust foster faith, hope and love?

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### Questions:

1. What kinds of stories do we tell ourselves? What might happen if we open up to the possibility of new stories? What can we do to foster that process?
2. If we can find a way to give up our fear of the loss of the known, what do you think we might find in its place? How would we act differently if we gave up that fear?
3. What stood out for you in this story from 1 Samuel? What sort of emotions do you think Samuel would have experienced in this story? How do you access the quiet voice of God?
4. Do you have a practice of centering, meditation or prayer? If so, what do you experience and what do you gain?
5. Where might you find some space in your life to welcome emptiness?

## EPISODE TITLE: "The Gift of Emptiness"

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 3

### Featured Guest: Chuck Marohnic

For 20 years, Chuck has had the privilege of serving as Music Director in numerous churches including United Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Churches of Christ. He is also a frequent guest performer and clinician at many churches and church conferences throughout the US. He served for 5 years as Director of Music for the now well known Studio Worship service at Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ in Scottsdale, AZ. After retiring from Arizona State University in 2003 as Director of Jazz Studies and moving to Louisville, KY with his wife Mary Ann, Chuck was asked by Eric Elnes, now senior Pastor at Countryside Community Church in Omaha, NE to help develop a jazz based worship service there.

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.'<sup>2</sup> Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord."' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.'<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?'<sup>5</sup> He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.<sup>6</sup> When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.'<sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.'<sup>9</sup> Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.'<sup>10</sup> Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.'<sup>11</sup> Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.'<sup>12</sup> He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.'<sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

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## Questions:

1. What is so frightening about the possibility of being thunderstruck?
2. What stood out for you from Job 37:1-5 & 14-18?
3. Have you ever been thunderstruck with insight? How did it happen? What was the result?
4. What qualities define a genuine thunderstrike insight?
5. Thunderstrikes undermine certainty with new information and revelation. Where do you find your faith in an uncertain world?
6. Eric found meaning in the flight of sandhill cranes. Have you been thunderstruck with insight from an unexpected source? What did you learn?

## EPISODE TITLE: "The Gift of Being Thunderstruck"

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 4

### Featured Guest: Melvin Bray

Born and raised in inner-city Washington, DC, by a strong single mother, I grew up in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-class faith community that gave me opportunities to live beyond the ordinary limitations of my socio-economic circumstance. My church was my first experience of the beauty that can arise when we transcend boundaries of difference, and I have lived my adult life helping others imagine even greater possibilities.

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: Job 37: 1-5, 14-18

‘At this also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place. Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth. Under the whole heaven he lets it loose, and his lightning to the corners of the earth. After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard. God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend. ‘Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. Do you know how God lays his command upon them, and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine? Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of the one whose knowledge is perfect, you whose garments are hot when the earth is still because of the south wind? Can you, like him, spread out the skies, unyielding as a cast mirror?

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**Questions:**

1. Has your path been straight or winding? Have the turns been gentle or sharp?
2. Has Christianity lost its way? If so, what has been the result?
3. In the face of great change, whose are you? What do you do? How do you believe?
4. If we are the next Great Awakening, what is required of us?
5. How is the lostness of Good Friday and the angst of Holy Saturday resolved in the promise of Easter Sunday?

**EPISODE TITLE: “The Gift of Lostness”**

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 5

**Featured Guest: Diana Butler Bass**

Diana Butler Bass is an author, speaker, and independent scholar specializing in American religion and culture. She holds a Ph.D. in religious studies from Duke University and is the author of eight books, including *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* A People’s History of Christianity: the Other Side of the Story (HarperOne, 2009). Publishers Weekly named her best-selling *Christianity for the Rest of Us* as one of the best religion books of 2006. She is a contributing editor for *Sojourners Magazine*.

**Pneuma Divina Scripture: Romans 8:18-28**

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>28</sup>We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

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## Questions:

1. Do you have a mission that calls to you? What is it?
2. What stood out for you from Matthew 4:1-11?
3. Are you able to find or make a safe space to listen to the voice of your soul?
4. What good works might tempt you away from your deep gladness?
5. How do you feel when you are following your central call? What are the results?

## EPISODE TITLE: "The Gift of Temptation"

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 6

### Featured Guest: Parker Palmer

Parker J. Palmer is a writer, speaker, and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change. His work speaks to people in many walks of life, including public and higher education, healthcare, religion, business, philanthropy, community organizing, and grass-roots social change. He has published a dozen poems, some 200 essays, and nine books, including several best-selling and award-winning titles.

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' <sup>4</sup>But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' <sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

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## Questions:

1. What frightens you more- the voice within that speaks of your shortcomings, or of your true power? Why?
2. What stood out for you from Mark 5:25 -34?
3. How does disappearing depend on personal particularity? Is it possible to find what you need by turning away from what is expected?
4. When we reach out towards the fullest expression of our humanity, what will it call us to do? Who will it call us to be?
5. What image of yourself is way too small for you? How might you disappear to that image?

## EPISODE TITLE: “The Gift of Disappearing”

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 7

### Featured Guest: Winnie Varghese

The Rev. Winnie Varghese is the 13th Rector of St. Mark’s-Church-in-the-Bowery in New York City. She is a native Texan with family roots in the ancient Mar Thoma church of southwest India (State of Kerala). She serves on the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Service Corps. She has been active in peace and justice work as a board member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship and a writer for The Witness magazine. She is featured in the Via Media and Living the Questions teaching series. She has served as Episcopal Chaplain at Columbia University and UCLA.

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: Mark 5:25 – 34

<sup>24</sup>So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. <sup>25</sup>Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. <sup>27</sup>She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>for she said, ‘If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.’ <sup>29</sup>Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. <sup>30</sup>Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ <sup>31</sup>And his disciples said to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, “Who touched me?”’ <sup>32</sup>He looked all round to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup>But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.’

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## EPISODE TITLE: “The Gift of the Misfits: Part One”

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 8

### Featured Guest: Jacob Slichter

BA, Harvard College. Author of *So You Wanna Be a Rock & Roll Star: How I Machine-Gunned a Roomful of Record Executives and Other True Tales from a Drummer's Life* (Broadway Books, 2004); contributor to *The New York Times*; commentator for National Public Radio's Morning Edition; drummer for the Minneapolis-based band, Semisonic. SLC, 2013.

### Questions:

1. If no one was judging, what is something your ideal faith community would be doing?
2. What stood out for you from Revelation 3:14-22?
3. What might we learn from thoughtful atheists and from people who have given up on church?
4. How can we as a community embrace the gift of welcoming, and being, misfits?

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: Revelation 3: 14-22

14 'And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: 15 'I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. 20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. 21 To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'

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## Questions:

1. What do you think the church is doing right these days?
2. In Luke 17:21 which translation; "... the kingdom of God is among you," –or- "...the kingdom of God is within you," resonates for you?
3. Does church work for you on a deeply personal level? What could change to make it more so?
4. What role does church tradition play in our culture? What role should it play?
5. What does it mean to call Jesus your king?

## EPISODE TITLE: "The Gift of the Misfits: Part Two"

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Episode 9

### Featured Guest: Lillian Daniel

Pastor, writer and teacher, Lillian Daniel has served as the Senior Minister of the First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn since 2004. Her book, *When Spiritual But Not Religious is Not Enough: Seeing God In Surprising Places*, Even the Church is a provocative case for why religious community matters. This much talked about book has been described as biting, hilarious, pitch perfect, tender and often stunningly beautiful. As editor at large for the Christian Century Magazine, and a contributing editor at Leadership Journal, her work has also appeared in The Huffington Post, Christianity Today, Relevant Magazine, Books and Culture, The Journal for Preachers and in the daily email devotionals available at [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org), with over 20,000 subscribers.

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: Luke 17:21

<sup>21</sup>nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.'

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## Questions:

1. What stood out for you from Matthew 14:22 -33?
2. Have you experienced failure? Has it ever lead you to something new or unexpected?
3. Does love win out over belief? If so, what is the result?
4. What might you accomplish if you weren't afraid of failure?

## EPISODE TITLE: "The Gift of Failure"

The Gifts of the Darkwood, Bonus

### Featured Guest: Frank Schaeffer

Frank is a survivor of both polio and an evangelical/fundamentalist childhood, an acclaimed novelist of 4 novels including Portofino who overcame severe dyslexia, a home-schooled and self-taught documentary movie director, a feature film director and producer of four low budget Hollywood features Frank has described as "pretty terrible." Of Frank's writing Jeff Sharlet (The New Statesman October 25, 2007 ) writes, "'Crazy For God' is a brilliant book, a portrait of fundamentalism painted in broad strokes with streaks of nuance, the twinned coming-of-age story of Frank and the Christian right."

### Pneuma Divina Scripture: Matthew 14: 22-23

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup>And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.

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