



Practicing
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Growing up in the West, I heard a lot of country music in my home. My parents played Glenn Campbell and Mac Davis, Tammy Wynette and Loretta Lynn. Every so often, however, something magical would happen. My parents would bring out their vinyl record of polka music. It filled the room with lively, joyous sounds.

It wasn't until college that I attempted to dance the polka. The school held a Viennese Ball every year and provided dance lessons to couples in the month preceding. We learned the basic steps of the waltz, swing, and, yes, the polka. On the night of the Viennese Ball, students dressed in their gowns and suits attempted the precise steps of the waltz, silently counting under our breaths. The swing picked up our tempo. When the polka music broke out, so did chaos. This was the first time I realized polka was a contact sport. Galloping and spinning, students collided, knocking each other to the floor. Girls sprawled in their ballgowns were helped back up, laughing despite the bumps and bruises. We polka-ed until we were breathless.

As Fall arrives, so does our Christian education programming. Some of our congregations designate a Rally Day to kick off Sunday School classes in September. One of the hallmarks of vital ministries is lifelong Christian discipleship. (In the coming year, the Presbytery will take a deep dive into these hallmarks as we intentionally pursue increasing our ministry vitality together – stay tuned!).

Like my dance classes, we need space to practice before we hit the dance floor. Our Christian education programs allow us to try something new and deepen our understanding. We can ask questions and test assumptions without feeling foolish. As we seek to become better disciples of Jesus, our studies often include a solid grounding in the Bible, of course. Our faith formation is more than that, however. Discipleship may include, for example, prayer circles, stewardship, spiritual disciplines, readings from Christians throughout the centuries, and sabbath-keeping. Through discipleship, we put our beliefs into practice and examine what happens.

Some of our initial steps will be slower, and we'll mentally count out our moves. We'll learn to look around the dance floor and see who is on the margins, uninvited. As the tempo picks up, so will our enthusiasm. From time to time, we'll collide with each other and go sprawling. With apologies and extended hands to help each other up, we'll shrug with laughter at the bumps and bruises and start again.

Our discipleship as Christians is lifelong. We don't go through confirmation classes and call it good. No matter what our age or length of time in the church, we have more practicing to do.

The pandemic has interrupted many of the in-person Christian education, but it's also forced our creativity. Online classes and outdoor, socially distanced opportunities await. Watch Fresh Impressions for invitations, and let us know if you'd like us to promote an activity you're hosting or wanting to share.

The challenge of becoming more Christ-like is one we share. As we practice together, our steps become more confident and natural. Blessings to all on your education programming and individual discipleship practices this Fall. May this time be filled with joy and leave you breathless.