



Dear Classis Leaders,

We are writing to introduce a reflection and feedback exercise, directly inspired by the Gather initiative. Gather was born from Synod 2023's call for a comprehensive strategy to address membership decline and foster growth within our church. This exercise is designed to engage you in spiritual discernment, mirroring the approach of Gather events, which were structured around the Emmaus Road story found in Luke 24:13-35.

In this exercise, we want to share with you some of the key principles of renewal we heard at Gather, and to see if and how they resonate with what you are experiencing on the ground in your unique ministry contexts. Your feedback will inform the creation of a renewal plan. Our commitment is to develop a renewal strategy that is directly informed by the needs and the successes of our church leaders and congregations.

Instructions for Facilitating Reflection on Gather

Group Formation and Setup:

We recommend setting aside a minimum of 30 minutes in your fall classis meeting. Divide classis delegates into groups of 5-6 people from different churches to ensure ample opportunity for contribution and deeper discussion. Choose a facilitator and a time monitor from the group participants to guide the conversation and monitor the time. Give each participant a copy of the *Reflection Guide* and a *Feedback Form*.

Group Discussion:

Gather identified three core principles for congregational renewal, as noted in the accompanying reflection guide. For each principle, encourage 2 minutes for silent reflection and journaling on their Feedback Form, followed by 8 minutes of group discussion using the provided questions. After discussing each principle, encourage participants to add their name and the name of their church at the bottom of the form.

Prayer and Feedback Forms:

Reconvene the delegates and conclude the time of reflection with *A Prayer of Preparation*, inspired by Gather participants. Collect forms from each of the delegates and give them to the denominational staff member present at the class meeting.

We pray that this structured reflection time will bless your classis. We eagerly anticipate hearing the stories and insights that emerge from your discussion. Two additional prayer guides are available for your classis to pray for renewal at two subsequent classis meetings.

Blessings,

Rev. Elaine May, DMin, ACC

Thrive Equip Team Lead and Congregational Renewal Consultant

crcna.org/Thrive | 800-272-5125 ext 2476 | emay@crcna.org

