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LEADER'S
GUIDE



Lifecraft

*The Art of Meaning
in the Everyday*

Forrest Church

by

NANCY PALMER JONES

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Lifecraft

The Art of Meaning in the Everyday

A Leader's Guide

by Nancy Palmer Jones

Based on *Lifecraft: The Art of Meaning in the Everyday* by Forrest Church (Beacon Press, 2000), this multiple-session program invites participants to explore together new ways of discovering and creating meaning in their lives.

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Introduction

We mortals are seekers of meaning. In response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die, we question what life means while attempting to create meaning within it.... I call this—the art of meaning—lifecraft.

Forrest Church

How can we discover meaning in the shapes our lives have taken? How can we create meaning through the projects—the family project, the work project, the social justice project, the self-improvement project, and more—to which we give our hearts, hands, and minds? *Lifecraft* is the term Forrest Church has coined to describe the skill and the art of making and discovering meaning in our daily lives. Lifecraft, then, is the ship that launches us toward life's meaning; it is the boat we use when we begin to search for God—or for whatever we would claim as whole and holy.

Using Forrest's *Lifecraft: The Art of Meaning in the Everyday* as a starting point, this workshop guides participants through a series of collaborative and self-reflective experiences, encouraging them to develop their own lifecraft. The exercises allow them to explore new modes of meaning making, even as they build a community of fellow seekers. By the workshop's end, participants will have picked up new resources and established new priorities as they move ahead with the most profound project they can undertake—that of discovering and creating meaning—and, we hope, they will have had fun in the process!

Opening to Experimentation and Allowing for Flexibility

This leader's guide groups together the chapters in Forrest's book to produce a four-week course. Each session is designed to last about two hours, and an allotted time is suggested for each exercise. Feel free to expand or contract the exercises to produce longer or shorter sessions; you can also change the workshop into a two-week or an eight-week course. Just as the exercises invite participants to experiment and to "play," you too can experiment, adding your own exercises or shifting the emphasis of those included here to match your group's style and interests.

Each session provides time for discussion of themes from the book, for one-on-one sharing of life stories, for private journaling and self-reflection, and for group projects. Leaders should participate in all activities, unless otherwise noted. Over the course of the workshop, participants

will create a gallery of their own “pictures from an exhibition,” transforming the space in which you meet and providing a visual marker of the growing web of meanings, projects, and identities that you will be discovering.

Getting Started

The group will need a comfortable room in which to meet, one with flexible seating to allow for the activities that ask the group to split into twos, threes, and fours. For some activities, you will need tables at which small groups can work. Be sure to figure out ahead of time how best to hang newsprint sheets around the room.

Pay attention to the warmth and attractiveness of the space, adding lamps or flowers to an “institutional” setting and arranging chairs and sofas in a circle to begin each session.

Before the first session, remind participants that they will need to bring a notebook, a pen or pencil, and a copy of *Lifecraft: The Art of Meaning in the Everyday*. They should read the Preface, Introduction, and Chapter One (“Pictures from an Exhibition”) before the workshop begins. To the first session, they should also bring images, articles, headlines, or phrases cut out from magazines and newspapers. These items should represent something meaningful in participants’ lives—or they may simply be those that strike participants as moving or interesting. Group members may bring as many of these cutout items as they like, but each should try to bring at least four.

As the leader, you should bring a large stack of such materials (for those participants who are unable to bring their own). If possible, also bring in a tape or CD player and a copy of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures from an Exhibition*. For each session, you will need a flip chart or large pad of newsprint, an easel, a set of colored markers, glue, Scotch tape, and masking tape. The homework assignments in the last exercise for each session indicate other supplies you may need for the next meeting.

Because participants will be sharing personal experiences and exploring important priorities, spend some time in the opening session building a sense of trust and encouraging a “playfully serious,” adventurous spirit in all involved. The exercises have been created with issues of building trust and maintaining personal boundaries in mind, but you will want to monitor the atmosphere in the group and make adjustments as needed.

Session 1: Life Projects— Creating Pictures from an Exhibition

Imagine your life as a series of works in progress presented daily at a craft fair. Each day's exhibits present an overlapping series of projects—the child project, the parent project, the love project, the vocation project, the justice project, even the God project. Add and subtract community projects and recreation projects, house projects and old friend reclamation projects. You might work on a project to enhance your church or college or to improve your neighborhood. Less important projects also possess meaning.... We work on dozens of projects at once, tasks that invest our lives with meaning.

Forrest Church

This session focuses on:

- getting to know each other and beginning to build a sense of collaboration
- identifying the meaning-making “projects” that each participant currently has under way
- reflecting on the shapes we discover and create in our lives
- creating a collaborative gallery of meaningful images and words
- selecting “snapshots” to save and carry forward

1. Getting Started

5 minutes

As soon as possible after the scheduled starting time, gather the group together and offer a short reading to focus participants’ minds and hearts on the exploration on which they are embarking. The reading can come from *Lifecraft* (see the epigraph on this page and at the beginning of this guide as examples), from this guide’s introduction, or from another source of your choosing. Ask participants to allow a moment of silence after the reading so that its words and ideas can resonate.

2. Naming Our Personal Projects

30 minutes

Offer a brief introduction to this workshop, borrowing from the introduction to this guide if you like and emphasizing that each participant has already brought a great gift to the group by being willing to share her or his experience with “lifecraft.”

Then ask members of the group to pair up, preferably with someone they do not know well. If there are an odd number of people in the group, one subgroup can include three. Be sure to include yourself. Ask partners to share with each other their name, where they live or what they do, and a brief description of one or two of the life projects that they care most about right now. What “works in progress” are they exhibiting today at their craft fair? Allot fifteen minutes for this process (remind them that this is just a beginning!); halfway through, ask the pairs to switch and let the other person talk.

Have each person introduce his or her partner to the larger group, describing the partner's projects as the gifts displayed in that person's “booth.” Each participant can add to his or her own introduction when the partner has finished.

During these introductions, list the participants' life projects, in general terms, on newsprint pages, leaving lots of room around each project name. Each time a project name is repeated (the “child” project might turn up often, for example, or the “growing older” project), add some special marks to the name in a different colored marker: put stars around it, circle it with a cloud shape, underline it, or draw arrows pointing toward it. While continuing to leave lots of room for future decorations, you want to note visually how often particular projects come up in your group.

When the introductions are complete, ask participants to call out the names of any other life projects in which they are engaged. Add these to the newsprint pages, leaving lots of room around them, and then post the newsprint pages around the room, letting participants know that you will be coming back to them later in this session.

3. Shaping the Stories of Our Lives 15 minutes

“The object of art is to give life a shape,” Jean Anouilh has said (*Lifecraft*, p. 13). Each of us is an artist, shaping and reshaping the very stuff of our lives, whether we do it consciously or not. For this journaling exercise, ask participants to think of their lives as divided into “periods,” like those that mark the changes in Picasso's work. Writing freely and quickly, participants can make a list of their own “periods”—passages in their lives that have been defined by a particular mood, event, or “project.” Perhaps these periods will take the names of a color that comes to mind (like Picasso's Rose and Blue periods); or they may be called by the style, mood, or medium they evoke (“abstract” or “representational,” “impressionist” or “cubist,” “dark” or “bright,” “watercolor” or “stone sculpture,” and so on); or perhaps they will be named for the person or place or thing who took center-stage during this

time. Remind participants that they don't need to be consistent (using all colors or all names) and that even a short-lived project can define an epoch in our lives. Suggest that they have some fun with this: sad times can take on a name that is silly or serious, just for now; the point is to sketch in the shape of one's life quickly and lightly.

About halfway through the allotted time, ask participants to stop writing and look back through their list. Remind them of the Cardinal Newman quotation—“to be perfect is to have changed often”—and of Forrest's description of Mussorgsky's “musical canvas” where “life is painful, sometimes grotesque, suddenly beautiful, often filled with struggle, and, potentially, redemptive.” Can participants find such changes and movements among the eras of their lives? Then ask them to look at each period and make a note of what and who they have loved most. “We are what we love,” Forrest writes; what, then, does this list tell us about who we are and about how we are shaping the story of our lives?

Encourage participants to continue this process of journaling and reflection during the coming weeks, allowing shapes and patterns to swim into focus as they discover, and invent, new meanings.

Break 10 minutes

While participants take a short break, set up a few tables at which people can work comfortably during the next exercise. On each table, place a few sheets of flip-chart paper. In a central location, spread out the magazine and newspaper cutouts that you have brought, along with the colored markers, glue, Scotch tape, and stickers.

4. Creating Our Own “Pictures from an Exhibition” 50 minutes

In this exercise, participants will collaborate to create their own gallery of “pictures from an exhibition.” Ask those participants who have brought images and articles, words or headlines, cut out from newspapers or magazines, to lay them out on the tables. Working in groups of twos or threes, participants should take the lists of projects compiled earlier in the session and decorate them. The decorations can be simple (circles, squares, stars, stick figures) or complex, serious or silly. They can make collages with the cutouts that you or they have brought; they can make swoops of color with the markers or layers of images with the stickers. Encourage them to design their pages together, drawing on an adventurous or a whimsical spirit—or even an outright artistic flair—to create additional collages and sketches on the other sheets of newsprint.

Suggest that participants “give away” some of their cutouts to their creative partners or to those at other tables; these gifts can serve as “sources” for someone else’s picture, much as Mussorgsky used his friend Hartmann’s paintings as sources for his music.

If participants feel “out of their comfort zone” in this “artistic” endeavor, encourage them to experiment, and to play. Remind them that “great art suspends judgment,” as Forrest says! Each person brings the rich resources of her or his own life perceptions and interests to this task. The exercise offers them the chance to “speak” about their lives, their projects, their passions and concerns, in another medium.

You might play a version of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures from an Exhibition* in the background as you and the other participants work on this project.

After half an hour, have participants stop work and hang their pictures around the room. Then lead a guided tour through this new gallery, asking participants to take in the beauty of these creations, even in their chaos. Ask them to say a word or two about the meanings they have gathered here, in the images and in the process of collaboration.

Invite participants to continue to build this gallery, adding images, project names, and decorations, throughout the sessions to come.

5. Saving Some Snapshots

10 minutes

Before moving into the reflection that concludes this session, ask participants to read Chapters Two (“Self-Portraits”), Three (“Character and Plot”), and Four (“Tombs and Monuments”) in *Lifecraft* for the next meeting.

Now read aloud the following quotation from the end of Chapter One:

We are free to choose, and therefore free to change and grow, with each passing day. We are also free to use our memories in ways that will invest our lives with meaning, sustaining rather than diminishing our self-image and, accordingly, our hopes. We can dwell on our failures or losses, refusing to let go of the darker sides of our past; this is like saving only the pictures we hate, darkening our walls, ruining our scrapbooks. Or we can do the opposite and keep alive fond memories.... As John C. Meagher writes, “Tell me ... what pictures are in your private album, and I will tell you who you are. But I remind you that you are, in substantial part, who you choose to be.”

Ask participants to think back over this session, reflecting especially on the journal entry they made about the periods of their lives. Suggest that they choose a few of their fondest snapshots from all the images that have come up over the course of the evening, and focus on them now, in the silence.

After a few minutes, read the following to close this session: “These are the pictures of our lives, our most precious keepsakes—most precious, because they remind us that we are what we love.”

Session 2: Self-Portraits— Discovering Character, Plot, and Through Line

As long as we perceive ourselves as a fixed self or identity rather than as a consortium of personae that take turns appearing on our stage, we will think either too highly or too lowly of ourselves. Both misperceptions throw us out of balance. If each of our personalities is made up of an amalgam of selves, they are also composed—not perfectly but tellingly—by memory. We remember—literally “put back together”—who we are.

Forrest Church

This session focuses on:

- sharing our stories and reconnecting with sources of energy and enthusiasm
- identifying the “characters” that form our identities
- using stories to discover “through lines” in the plot of our lives
- naming the elements in our own “time capsule”

Be sure to rehang the “pictures from an exhibition” created during Session One.

1. Gathering Together 5 minutes

Begin this session with a brief reading, using the epigraph on this page, another quotation from *Lifecraft*, or one of your favorite poems. Ask that everyone let these words resonate for just a moment in silence.

2. Reconnecting with the Passion of Adolescence 30 minutes

“As a window on life’s meaning, adolescence remains the perfect starting place,” Forrest writes. Ask participants to pair up with someone they do not know well. Invite them, for the next fifteen minutes, to share a story from their adolescence—perhaps a distant memory for some, an ongoing reality for others in your group! In this memory exercise, participants are looking for some passionate interest that gave them a sense of who they were. Did this interest spark an arc of meaning that they can still trace in their lives? Could some part of this energy be used judiciously to feed one or more of their current personal pro-

jects? How? “Leash the passion of adolescence to the experience of adulthood, and we might infuse practicality with excitement while tempering excess by prudence,” Forrest suggests. What kinds of connections come to mind as participants share their stories?

Ask participants to offer each other the gift of wholehearted listening. We can honor the adolescent seeker in each of us by entering into each other’s stories empathetically. Allow twenty minutes for this part of the exercise; remind participants to switch speakers halfway through.

For the last ten minutes of this exercise, have people call out some of the ideas that surfaced about how to channel the energy of adolescence into adult projects. Make a quick list on newsprint and add it to the gallery.

3. Naming Our Identities 25 minutes

“None of us is an individual pure and simple,” Forrest writes. “We each are a nexus of relationships and roles,” and each of us belongs to a “collaborative, if not always mutually cooperative, whole, each part intimately related to the others, shaped and changed in relationship.” In the “interdependent web of all existence,” we each play many parts. Ask participants to spend about ten minutes listing in their journals their various identities; these may consist of relationships they cherish (parent, child, friend ...), of positions they hold (homemaker, lawyer, student), of vocations and avocations, as well as any other defining characteristics. Remind them to include race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, nationality—even their place in a historical context (baby boomer, child of the sixties, eighties entrepreneur...), if they like. They can include identities they have been and those they would like to become. And don’t forget the adolescent identities they have just invoked!

While they are writing in their journals, you should make two new sketches on newsprint sheets: one of a very large web of intersecting lines, another of a very large arcing rainbow whose ends are invisible beyond the borders of the page.

About halfway through the allotted time, ask participants to look back over their lists with this quotation in mind: “the key to identity is not selfhood but integration.... When we integrate our values, projects, and relationships, our lives cohere.” To achieve such coherence, we have to make some choices; we have to do some “thoughtful wishing,” as Forrest puts it, recognizing both our limits and our gifts.

Then invite participants to use the colored markers to fill in the large sketches you have made, choosing from among their many identities all those that can contribute

to the web of relationships and that can help build an arc of characters striving together to move toward who they want to become. They can write the names of these identities along the lines of the sketches you have drawn. Add these sketches to the group's ever-expanding gallery. Invite participants to continue to add to them, as well as to the other pictures in the exhibition, during the break.

Break 10 minutes

4. Discovering Our Through Lines in Others' Stories 45 minutes

"By empathy—entering another person's story, its character and plot—we discover meaning in our own story... Anything that brings us together—inspiring us to open our hearts, hands, or minds, to forget our differences for a moment and remember we are one—is a sacrament," Forrest suggests.

Ask participants to gather in groups of three or four; they might want to have in hand their copy of *Lifecraft*. Forrest tells a number of stories throughout the chapters participants have read for this week—of Princess Diana, Mark Rypien, Frank Church, Chase Clark, and Corinna Marsh (pages 42–52), for example, or of the woman who stops listening to her dreams (pages 58–59), as well as many others. Ask each participant to reflect for a moment on which of these stories strikes the deepest chord for him or her. Perhaps one of these stories reminds participants of legends from their own family storehouse. Ask them to share their responses to these stories, plucking out the "through lines" that resonate with their own life's plot. What can they learn from listening to these stories, and to those of their fellow participants? Ask them to open their hearts and minds to these real-life tales, allowing in the poignancy and the humor, the bitter and the sweet, the meaning to be gleaned from the everyday.

5. Creating a Time Capsule 15 minutes

Before moving into this session's concluding reflection, ask participants to read Chapters Five ("The God Project") and Six ("The Music of Prayer") in *Lifecraft* for the next meeting. In addition, ask them to bring in one image or small object, a brief story or short piece of music that inspires awe in them.

Now ask participants to listen closely as you read a fairly lengthy passage from *Lifecraft*. Begin with Forrest's question "What would you put in your own time capsule?" on page 63, and read through to the end of the next paragraph (the last sentence is "Or a lifetime friendship that grew and

grew with every passing year"). Ask participants to imagine what they would put in their own time capsules. For what five things would they like to be remembered? Remind them, once again, that "we are what we love." Allow some time in the silence for each person to stock her or his capsule with what is most beloved and precious.

Close with this suggestion, taken from early in the Introduction to *Lifecraft*. Each of our projects can be broken down into "smaller, more manageable projects," Forrest writes. "By doing a single thing to make our spouse [or friend, or parent, or child, or self] happier and by sustaining it over time, we can change the entire dynamic" of any relationship. Ask participants to find one simple thing that they can do and sustain over the next week that will help to move one of their personal projects forward. Invite them to bring some of their adolescent energy to the task. Suggest that they make a note in their journal of how this "project management" goes for them. Results that seem subtle and inward may mark the most profound shifts, only to become more visible as the "plot" of our life rolls on.

Session 3: The God Project— Looking for Awe and Learning to Listen

For me, the primary religious emotion is awe, not only the awe that follows our inability to answer the question “Why is there something instead of nothing?” but also the awe inspired by anything from a sunset to an encounter with a previously unfamiliar, almost impossible-to-imagine living creature.

Forrest Church

This session focuses on:

- sharing experiences of awe
- looking at our projects in new ways
- discussing the different paths toward the holy
- learning to listen through experiences of prayer or meditation

Be sure to rehang the group's gallery created in the last two sessions.

1. Gathering Together 5 minutes

Begin this session with a brief reading—from this guide, from Forrest's book, or awe-inspiring words of your choice—and ask that everyone let these words resonate for a moment in silence.

2. Illuminating Our Awesome World 40 minutes

Ask each participant to share the image, object, story, or piece of music that has prompted an experience of awe. Have participants offer a brief explanation of the context for this experience. Invite each to add something to the exhibition that will symbolize this awesome experience—an image, poem, word, the title of the story or musical composition. Remind participants that they can keep adding to the exhibition throughout the rest of the workshop.

3. Turning Our Projects Upside Down 15 minutes

“Whatever project we may be pursuing, as soon as we think we have something right side up, we should experiment by flipping it over,” Forrest writes. Whether or not participants feel that their projects are “right side up,” invite them now to experiment by turning them upside down. Writing quickly in their journals, participants can try

thinking about their projects in new ways; if, for example, they have been pushing hard to accomplish a particular task, invite them to imagine what might happen if they relax their superhuman efforts. Can they picture an “effortless”—or “tensionless”—resolution to a problem? What if they flipped the amount of time and energy going into two different projects—say, work and home life? How about turning upside down whatever concepts they may have of God or the divine? Suggest to participants that they “stay loose” with this exercise, allowing creativity and imagination to overtake their usual commonsense. Then offer them a moment to reflect on anything they might have learned from looking at projects from this new angle.

Break 10 minutes

4. Discerning Our Path to the Divine 15 minutes

“Our nature, temperament, and personality do help determine our spiritual path,” Forrest explains, before summarizing seven different archetypal “paths to God.” Write the seven paths on a flip chart: the Child, the Lover, the Champion, the Servant, the Dreamer, the Mystic, and the Star Gazer. Invite participants to refer to Forrest's descriptions (pages 72–78) and then offer brief stories or additional thoughts on each one. Does each participant already know which path best suits him or her? Are there any other paths that participants would like to add to the list?

Now give participants an assignment for the coming week: Invite them to try out these different paths. They can try out a different one each day, or they can pick several that they have never explored before and try them on for size. Remind them of the energy they accessed when thinking about adolescence, and invite them to apply the same kind of experimentation to this exercise. Brainstorm ways in which participants might experiment with these paths in a brief amount of time. Explain that this one week of consciously “taking day hikes” on the different paths provides another way of turning participants' projects—especially their “God project”—upside down. Ask them to take notes on their experiences; there will be time to talk about these experiments during the next session.

5. Learning to Listen 25 minutes

Ask participants to take a moment to stretch. Invite those who would like to remain standing to do so, as you ask them to close their eyes and listen—just listen. Allow a good long minute or so for people to breathe and listen in the silence. Then read this quotation from *Lifecraft*: “Even before it is an act of self-expression, prayer is an act of

empathy. Prayer involves listening.”

Ask participants to gather in groups of three or four to talk about their own experiences with prayer or meditation. Remind them to listen empathetically; this conversation, too, can be a prayer. Direct them to Forrest's descriptions of prayer on pages 89–92 in *Lifecraft*, where he identifies four types: confession, or prayers for integrity; petition, or prayers for reconciliation; thanksgiving or consecration, prayers for holiness; and prayers of forgiveness. All lead toward health, wholeness, and the holy. Does meditation—focusing on the breath or heartbeat, quieting the mind—accomplish some of the same things?

After about fifteen minutes, invite participants, from wherever they are sitting, to join together in group meditation or prayer. You might begin with some directed meditation, inviting participants to focus on the breath, the body, the present moment. You may have your own favorite sources; Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Blooming of a Lotus* (Beacon Press, 1993) also offers excellent examples. Then ask participants to move into silent meditation or prayer for the remainder of the allotted time. They may want to focus on one or more basic relationships: to self, to others, or to ground of being; they may want to try one or another of the forms of prayer they have been discussing. Most of all, they will want to *listen*, and to notice, gently, where they feel scattered or broken, inviting a sense of wholeness to enter on the breath.

6. Returning to Awe 10 minutes

Before closing this session, ask participants to read Chapters Seven (“A Mystery Story”), Eight (“Poetry in Motion”), and the Afterword in *Lifecraft* for the next session. Ask them to bring in at least one more item to add to their gallery and at least two contributions for the closing party—something to eat or drink, and some music to share.

Then invite participants to revisit the experiences of awe they shared at the beginning of this session. Is there a piece of music, or a poem or story, they would like to hear again? Do this now, and then suggest that they spend the last few minutes looking for awe in the gallery they have created.

Session 4: Mystery Stories— Experiencing the Three E's ... and Turning the Page

Living is a form of not being sure, not knowing what is next or how. The moment you know how, you begin to die a little. The artist never entirely knows. We guess. We may be wrong, but we take leap after leap in the dark.

Agnes de Mille

Let me leave you with three things that invest my own life with meaning.

Enthusiasm: being filled with God

Ecstasy: standing outside of myself

Empathy: being within another

Forrest Church

This session focuses on:

- sharing stories of the paths participants have tried during the week
- experiencing the three E's
- reviewing our personal projects
- turning the page

1. Gathering Together 5 minutes

As always, begin this session with a brief reading—from this guide, from *Lifecraft*, or words of your choice—and ask that everyone let these words resonate for a moment in silence.

2. Sharing Experiences and Experiments 20 minutes

Ask participants to pair up with someone with whom they have not been paired during the earlier sessions. Invite them to share their experiences with the different paths toward the holy that they tried during the preceding week. Did they discover new routes that they might want to pursue? Did some paths not appeal at all? What made them unappealing? Did any of their experiences change their minds about which path fits them best?

Just before the halfway point, when pairs may be switching speakers, ask them to add a word or two about their prayer life in the past week. Were there moments when they found themselves “listening” in new ways? Make sure each partner has a chance to respond.

3. Experiencing the Three E's 25 minutes

Ask participants to spend some time free-writing in their journals about the three E's. Use the following questions as guides (you can list these, in shorthand, on the flip chart):

- What are your enthusiasms? What fills you with energy and unites you with fellow enthusiasts? Make a list. Are any of these enthusiasms “out of balance”? Have any of them become “idols”? Put an asterisk by those that need reshaping. Underline those that can become more important projects.
- What experiences offer you moments of ecstasy? When are you able to “stand outside yourself”? What meaning does ecstasy have, or create, for you? Do you sometimes feel stuck inside your own point of view? What projects might help you healthily and ecstatically “give yourself away” and so find yourself?
- With whom do you have the most empathy? What helps you to be more empathetic? How can you offer others more opportunities to empathize with you?

For the last five minutes of this exercise, invite participants to share any insights or inspirations they may have gained through this process.

Break 10 minutes**4. Revisiting Our Life, Revising Our Projects**

20 minutes

Ask participants to sit quietly and breathe together. Then invite them, as Forrest does in *Lifecraft*, to see their lives flash before their eyes. For just one minute, they should fast-forward through their life story—character, plot, and through line; projects finished, unfinished, and never started; paths explored or left undiscovered.

Now ask them to make one final group list: which projects do they want to add, which ones do they want to emphasize? List them on newsprint as you did during the first session, leaving lots of room around each item and decorating those that are repeated. In the time remaining for this session, invite participants to decorate these sheets as they have the others.

5. Turning the Page ... 40 minutes

Read aloud the following quotation from *Lifecraft*:

As I plunge deeper, in fits and starts, seeking to penetrate the mystery of life and God, the mystery grows. It grows in wonder, power, moment, and depth. There are times, many times, when God is

not with me, times of distraction, fragmentation, alienation, and brokenness. But when I open myself to God, incrementally my wholeness is restored. Perhaps that which I call God is no more than the mystery of life itself. I cannot know, nor do I care, for the power that emanates from deep within the heart of this mystery is redemptive. It is divine. Without hoping or presuming to understand it, opening myself to it, I find peace.

Ask participants to look around the room: first, take in the exhibition they have created—this is what they have made, in a few short weeks, out of their lives, their stories, their heartfelt hopes and dreams, their talents, and their willingness to try and to share. Next, take in the faces of their companions on this journey, honoring their courage, their humor, their projects, their multiple identities, and their depth of spirit. Invite them all to thank each other as they “turn the page” on this experience—by spending the remaining moments eating, drinking, listening to music, enjoying the gallery, and throwing themselves one big celebratory party.

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