

LEADER'S GUIDE

For Conducting a Workshop Using My Book

MAKING CROSSES: A Creative Connection to God

By Ellen Morris Prewitt

The following is a Leader's Guide to a basic two-hour cross making workshop. The workshops can be shorter or longer, including workshops held in several sessions that span weeks; adjust the suggested times allotted for each activity to the workshop time available to you. This basic workshop outline can be used for all groups (Adult Formation classes, Bible study groups, Lenten study groups, women's retreats, prayer groups, book clubs, Wednesday Evening Church Meetings, grief support groups, neighborhood clean-ups, hospice families, "empty nesters," breast cancer survivors, divorce recovery, etc.). Depending on your group, this basic outline can be adapted to combine the cross making with other spiritual practices, such as writing exercises, walking the labyrinth, etc. Cross making can be done in mixed-age groups (e.g. Family Friday Nights) but a different approach applies when children are cross makers; this Leader's Guide is for adults.

PREPARATION

- Determine whether the workshop will have a theme (see Chapter 16, page 105, of Making Crosses for a discussion of themes) and, if so, decide your theme
- Gather supplies found in the Appendix (p. 126) of Making Crosses. If appropriate, ask participants to bring their own glue, scissors, etc, so they can arrive at the workshop as active participants
- Ask your participants to bring crossbeams, found objects, broken jewelry, recycled tissue paper - whatever they want to use in making their crosses. Add to the list any supplies, such as glue or scissors, you want participants to bring.
- Anticipating that many participants will not, in fact, bring their own crossbeams and adorning objects, etc, gather extra materials for those who arrive empty-handed.
- Determine the best arrangement of your room to enable the feeling of a group working in support of one another. A "U" shaped arrangement of tables is ideal, where participants face each other. Set up your tables accordingly. If the tables need to be covered in butcher paper to protect the surface, do so.
- If the room allows participants to sit in one space for the introduction of cross making, then move to the tables for cross making, consider whether you want to do that - will your group be distracted by the presence of supplies?
- Distribute supplies on the tables (scissors, bottles of glue, bowls of water for tissue paper) or set up a supply table to the side where participants can select what they

need. The supply table can also hold extra crossbeams, adornment objects, etc. that you or other participants have brought for the group's use.

- If all participants do not have a Making Crosses book, make one available to the group for participants to use as they work if they so desire.
- Some people appreciate music for a meditative atmosphere while working. If you chose to do so, set that up as well.
- Select the holy readings you want to use to: (1) open cross making; (2) bring participants out of silence mid-way through the workshop; and, (3) close the workshop. Also select any passages from Making Crosses you want to use to illustrate points of the practice.
- Take a moment to pray for the participants who will be arriving to experience this new type of prayer.

THE WORKSHOP

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO CROSS MAKING (APPROX 20 MINS)

- Introduce cross making as a type of prayer using items unvalued by the world to commune with God. If your cross making workshop is based on a theme, introduce the theme as well
- Highlight concepts in cross making
 - Using objects unvalued by God as a way of entering into God's way of thinking, rather than that of the world
 - Allowing physical activity to ground us in prayer
 - Being open to the movement of the Spirit in our cross making
 - Learning a way of prayer, rather than defining for the cross makers what the relationship with the cross should be
 - Instilling a new way of looking at the world, where all of creation can be used to glorify God
 - Praying within a group of cross makers while spending personal time with God
- Describe what, in particular, drew you as the workshop leader to this practice
- Outline the order of activity
 - Select cross beams
 - Bind into shape of a cross
 - Adorn cross
 - Share story of the cross
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NOTE: Most workshops do not have sufficient time to engage in collection during the workshop. If your workshop will be three hours or more, add Collection as the first activity. Allow at least twenty minutes for actual collection and an additional ten minutes for a discussion on the experience (any surprising or unexpected happenings, how the Holy Spirit led the collection path, any objects with particular meaning that were found, etc.) Introduce this activity by reading brief passages from Making Crosses Chapter 7 on Collection (p.43) or using the leader's own experience with collection. Encourage

participants to collect what they are drawn to, not worrying about how they will use it. Remind them to study an object before picking it up and to be careful of sharp objects. Also encourage them to make “extra” collected objects available to the group.

- Offer several general guidelines on cross making:
 - Cross makers work at their own pace. If someone finds a certain activity deeply attractive, stay there
 - Be open to the movement of the Spirit, ready to discard any “cross plan” brought to the workshop
 - Don’t look at your neighbor’s cross, because it will always look better than yours
 - In selecting cross material, simply choose what the Spirit draws you to, without needing to know how you might use it in your cross.
 - Additional explanation and tips will be given as the workshop proceeds. If at any time someone gets stuck, ask them to raise their hand and maybe you can work it out together
 - Describe “10 minutes of silence”
 - Once cross making is underway, the leader will take participants into 10 minutes of silence with a holy reading.
 - The group will not talk during silence. This allows the focus to shift from the horizontal connection of a group to the vertical connection with God
 - The leader will bring participants out of silence with a collective break in silence group recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, a familiar call and response, such as “the Lord be with you”/“And also with you”, etc.)
 - Ask for any questions participants need answered before proceeding
 - End the introduction with the warm up exercises in Making Crosses Chapters 1 (p.6) and 2 (p. 12). Ask participants to shut their eyes while the leader reads. Omit the references to writing down answers. Allow answers to be silent or spoken aloud.

PART II: MAKING OUR CROSSES (APPROX 1 1/2 HRS)

- Open cross making with your holy reading
- Select crossbeams
 - The workshop probably will have a mix of participants, some of whom have brought their own crossbeams and others who need to select from the sticks, etc. the leader has made available.
 - Reiterate the role of the Spirit in “unplanned” selection of materials.
 - Often, participants will want to shorten small stick crossbeams. Advise them to grip the sticks with both hands and break, rather than attempt to cut with scissors, as this causes stick parts to fly off
- Wind the crossbeams into the shape of a cross
 - Demonstrate the basic winding technique
 - Begin in the upper left quadrant of the cross
 - Leaving a short bit of string to tie off later, lay the string diagonally downward from left to right
 - Cross to the left behind the vertical crossbeam
 - Wrap the string diagonally upward from left to right

- Cross to the left behind the cross and repeat series of movement
- Repeat until the cross feels secure and tie.
- If a participant forgets to leave the bit to tie off, just thread the end of the winding material under one of the diagonal sections and tie off.
- If the cross beams are heavy, use wire as the winding material and first secure the wire to one of the crossbeams before winding. Once in place, the wire can be covered in a more decorative winding material if desired.
- Advise participants that the winding process is the hardest, most cumbersome part of cross making - as laying the foundation of something new always is.

NOTE: From this point forward, the leader will have members of the group working at their own pace. In introducing each new phase of activity, always preface it with “for those who are ready” or similar recognition that the leader is only gently guiding the activity.

NOTE: When you feel that the group has settled into the following activities, begin your ten minutes of silence. Seldom does the level of “chatter” return to pre-silence levels. After the silence, feel free to ask participants how the silent time felt.

NOTE: Feel free, throughout this work process, to offer holy readings or readings related to your theme as you feel appropriate, ever mindful that, for many, the opportunity to work in silence is highly valued.

- Adorn the crosses
 - Direct participants to the adornment options available
 - Suggest participants select more objects than they expect to use, take the selected objects to their work area and meditate further on the objects in front of them. Encourage physical meditation - handling the objects - to discern the connection.
 - Demonstrate the use of tissue paper as found in Chapter 6 (p. 40) of Making Crosses
 - Rip a manageable strip of paper
 - Trail the strip through the watered-down Elmer’s Glue
 - Wrap the wetted (not drenched) paper onto the cross beam
 - Repeat in any pattern or non-pattern desired
 - Advise participants to expect saturated colors (e.g. red, black) to bleed onto their fingers
- Encourage participants to consider methods of adhering objects that do not use glue - natural holes, hooks, wiring, hanging, etc. This is explained in detail in on page 61 of Making Crosses, Chapter 9
- Advise participants to expect that some glued objects will not be dry by the end of the workshop, so transport carefully
- **PART III: SHARING THE STORY OF OUR CROSSES (APPROX 1/2 HR)**
- Always leave time for participants to share the story of their crosses. This includes the meaning of the objects used, whether the cross changed from what they had originally

envisioned, how the practice felt, what made them uncomfortable, what they enjoyed, etc.

- Assure participants that sharing their story is purely voluntary; remind participants of the confidentiality of what is shared in the group
- If the group is large, suggest a time limit on each story
- Let time lengthen between tellings to encourage others to join in - sometimes it takes a period of silence for a participant to speak up
- When all who want to share have done so, ask the participants to hold up their crosses (to the extent objects won't fall off!) so the group can enjoy for a minute the workings of the Spirit in their group of cross makers
- End with a closing prayer
- Thank your participants for being cross makers with you today

ALSO SEE THE WORKSHOP TIPS CONTAINED IN *MAKING CROSSES* (published by Paraclete Press and available from booksellers everywhere), pages 127-132.

Feel free to contact me, Ellen Morris Prewitt, at www.makingcrosses.com with any questions you have.