

Are you thinking of hosting a FW101 retreat for your congregation?

Here are a few important learnings about Faithwalking to keep in mind...

- Overview of Faithwalking -

Faithwalking is an ongoing spiritual formation process that moves people at their own pace (in safe yet challenging ways) with teaching, coaching, and support. Faithwalking works to bring people to a place where they experience and learn through self-awareness, inner-healing, and emotional maturity, while constantly hearing the call to recognize what obstacles in themselves keep them from living on mission with Christ. Faithwalking is NOT a discipleship program or an evangelism program to funnel people through in order to grow your church. It is a process by which participants see their everyday lives and the places they frequent the most as their places of living on mission with God, bringing God's wholeness into all the broken areas and relationships where they live and lead and have influence.

- Learning In-context and out-of-context -

One of the key principles of FW is learning out-of-context in order to further transformation in-context

- The deepest transformational work happens out-of-context (getting tup into the balcony)
 - Individuals need to get out of the systems with which they are familiar (their family system, congregational system, etc) in order to fully see those systems and how they as an individual "show up" in those systems
 - Getting out-of-context helps further the transformational work they are called to take on once they go back to those systems
- Hosting a retreat or session at a location *other than at a church building/campus with which people are familiar* is highly recommended
 - Our minds go where our bodies go, so if we're in a familiar space our minds will want us to be what our natural/learned ways of being *have always been* in that space.
 - Being in an unfamiliar place helps participants enter more fully into the hard work of transformation and see themselves more clearly
- An out-of-context space also allows for...
 - Everyone to be on the same level, as no participant has a higher or lower status within the space or knowledge of the space
 - A reduction in the participant's control/responsibility for the space, so each participant can fully participate (and not be distracted with responsibilities for the space, such as hospitality or meals)
- Hosting sessions in-context (or in-house, at one's church building/campus)

- This very well reduces costs but also reduces the impact toward deeper transformation, as the people aren't able to fully remove themselves from the context
 - Retreat leaders will have to be clear that in-context learning toward transformation is difficult... that participants will need to get present to and keep in check how their mind is working in a familiar space (this usually isn't something that is explained or covered in 101, but becomes part of the learning in 201)
 - The hosting church will have to make sure that participants aren't responsible for anything else except showing up to the retreat ready to learn
 - Things like set-up and tear-down, or making coffee, or setting up for meals, etc will need to be done ahead of time or other individuals who aren't a part of retreat will need to be available to do those tasks
 - This pertains to small group leaders as well (see below)
- Order for the sessions -
 - Each session includes a time of presentation in large group (about 45 min), solitude (45 min), small group sharing (45 min), large group sharing (15 min)
 - Presentations call participants to consider new ways of being, thinking, and doing... as we all are called to live fully human lives as disciples of Christ
 - Solitude times guide participants into practicing reflective living in the Holy Spirit with silence, prayer, curiosity, and inner authenticity
 - Small groups are 3-4 individuals (including a trained small group leader who maintains a safe yet challenging space) that offers space for participants to practice authentic community with integrity and vulnerability, as they say what they are getting out of the prior presentation and solitude, and what the Spirit is revealing to them
 - Large group times offer moments to practice authenticity and vulnerability with what they got out of the prior presentation and solitude, while also being free to express where they see resistance in themselves. During this time a retreat leader coaches those who choose to share through their processing and learning.
- Logistics for a FW101 gathering
 - Group Size
 - The ideal size for a FW101 group would be 18-22 first-time participants
 - In addition to those 18-22, there will be 4-6 small group leaders (see below) and 2-4 presenters... so there could be anywhere between 20 to 32 people total present for a FW101 retreat

- A group smaller than 15 first-time participants might not be as cost effective, but is doable, depending on the travel needs of presenters and small group leaders
 - A group larger than 22 gets to be too large to be conducive in working toward authenticity and vulnerability in large group sessions, as certain types of people will not “show up” fully if the group is too large
- Small group leaders (SGL)
 - Every retreat requires one SGL for every 3-4 participants
 - It is highly recommended for SGLs to have gone through FW101 prior to leading a small group at a FW101 retreat. This means...
 - A congregation choosing to do their own FW101 should work ahead, by choosing a handful of leaders to attend a FW101 *prior to* their own FW101
 - In lieu of the above, a congregation choosing to do an internal FW101 will need to be aware that the NYFWC will have to obtain SGLs from outside the congregation
- Physical space
 - It is important to create a space that is physically inviting and comfortable since the emotional/spiritual challenge is elevated
 - The large group space needs to be big enough to comfortably hold everyone, while having space for a presenter to stand (with screen and projector)
 - Comfortable chairs placed a foot or so apart in an arch, facing the presentation area
 - Don't bunch the chairs together in a formal classroom style or put chairs around tables in a boardroom/conference style (Did you know that tables are physical barriers that keep people emotionally distant from one another?)
 - The small group spaces need to be comfortable spaces and removed from one another in out-of-the-way areas, in order that vulnerable conversations can be held and so that distractions can be held to a minimum
- Moving beyond FW101 into FW201
 - The bulk and depth of transformational learning and accountability is done in FW201, which is a 6 month course where participants meet as a group with a facilitator every other week (usually over an online video conference call), while also meeting weekly with a coach (either over video conference call or by phone)
 - When planning a FW101 gathering, it is also good to plan, with the NYFWC leadership, a six-month period for FW201
- Funding

- The NY Faithwalking Circle (NYFWC) is part of the larger Faithwalking movement that covers many parts of the US, Canada, and Central America.
 - The NYFWC is locally lead and operated by RCA leaders, yet it is dependant upon and requires assistance from the wider Faithwalking community.
 - The central leadership of Faithwalking, based in Houston, TX, avail themselves to train leaders, coaches, and presenters within each FW Circle, as well as forming and updating the curriculum for all FW courses offered.
 - Because of this, the NYFWC has agreed to pay Faithwalking Houston \$75 for each new participant in FW101 (no matter the format being used). Currently, this “fee” is passed on to each participant, along with the costs of the retreat and lodging (while being offset with funds from RSA and RSNY).
- An additional \$75 will need to be paid by each participant who signs up for any further courses offered through Faithwalking Houston (FW201, FW202, and FW301... see www.faithwalking.us for details on these courses).