

The background of the cover features abstract, flowing shapes in shades of yellow and maroon. A prominent, dark maroon shape flows diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right, resembling a liquid being poured. Other lighter yellow shapes swirl around it, creating a sense of movement and depth.

NEW WINE NEW WINESKINS

*A faith-sharing
resource for
restructuring
parishes*

JEFFRY ODELL KORGEN

with contributions from Martha Eckert

NEW WINE NEW WINESKINS

A faith-sharing resource
for restructuring parishes

By Jeffry Odell Korgen
with Martha Eckert



Copyright © 2015 by RENEW International

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the publisher.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Reverend Monsignor James F. Cafone, S.T.D.

Archdiocese of Newark

Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

Most Reverend John J. Myers, J.C.D., D.D.

Archbishop of Newark

Cover design by Ruth Markworth

Text design by Kathrine Kuo

ISBN 978-1-62063-098-3

RENEW International

1232 George Street

Plainfield, NJ 07062

www.renewintl.org

Additional resources for *New Wine, New Wineskins* are available at
www.renewintl.org/newwineskins.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Presenting RENEW International.....	vi
Introduction	vii
Faith Sharing in a Small Community	ix
Faith Sharing Principles and Guidelines	xv
Structure and Flow of a Session	xvi
About the Authors	xviii
Session One – Jesus Christ: In Our Hearts, in Our Lives.....	1
Session Two – The Church: The People of God.....	8
Session Three – Change in Our Lives, Our Church, Our World.....	14
Session Four – The Paschal Mystery: From Death into Life	20
Session Five – Discernment: Discovering the Movement of the Holy Spirit..	27
Session Six – The Common Good.....	33
Session Seven – A New Catholic Community	40
Session Eight – Unity in Christ: What Does It Mean?.....	46
Session Nine – Honoring Our Diversity	53
Session Ten – Stewards of God’s Gifts.....	59
Session Eleven – Envisioning Discipleship in a New Parish Community.....	66
Session Twelve – Becoming an Evangelizing Parish	73

INTRODUCTION

“Then the disciples of John approached him and said, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast (much), but your disciples do not fast?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse. People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.’”

— **Matthew 9:14-17**

“**N**ew wine, new wineskins” is a biblical metaphor with which many of us are familiar. Questioned by the people, Jesus offers an explanation as to why his disciples do not fast as the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist do. Jesus compares the suggestion that his disciples should adopt the ascetic practices of these groups with putting “new wine into old wineskins” (Matthew 9:14-17, Mark 2:21-22, and Luke 5:33-39).

Jesus’ listeners would be familiar with the comparison. At that time, wine was stored not in glass bottles but in animal skins which stretched as the wine continued to ferment. Old wineskins would have been stretched near to capacity. Adding new wine to old wineskins would lead to only one outcome: “the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined.” Instead, “new wine is put into fresh wineskins.”

In Jesus’ metaphor, the wineskins represent the structures of his own Jewish faith. He now brings a ministry of “new wineskins” in his announcement of the reign of God. He seeks to build a container, a new wineskin, that will be both strong and flexible to hold the new wine of his followers: “New wine into fresh wineskins.”

In every age, there is the temptation to rely on structures that have stretched to their limit and are no longer viable containers for “new wine.” In our time, we can understand the 21st-century faithful of the Church in North America as the “new wine” and the new parish structures adopted in recent years as the “new wineskins.”

This resource is designed to help parishioners consider the nature of both the new wine and the new wineskins in a merged or “shared” parish or a collaborative. A merged parish is created when a bishop unites two or more parishes to form one new parish. A shared parish is formed when a community within an existing parish—for example, a Filipino community within a largely English-speaking

parish—becomes a distinct entity that prays, worships, and interacts according to its own traditions. It becomes, in a sense, a parish within a parish.

Sometimes the communities that make up a restructured parish will go their separate ways, maintaining their distinct traditions under the same administrative umbrella, without asking the question, “How is our parish also one community in Christ Jesus?”

New Wine, New Wineskins seeks to foster a parish-wide conversation about that question through twelve weekly sessions. Early meetings will encourage parishioners to reflect on their identity as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, the meaning of Church, and the constant of change in their lives. They will consider what the Paschal Mystery means in their lives, their collective parish identity, their shared experiences of the sacraments, and the places and times in which they experience church unity. Members of merged and shared parishes will honor their diversity and experience of loss even as they explore sources of church unity, embracing both the “many parts” and the “one body” of the Church.

The latter sessions move from identity to mission, beginning with a discussion of stewardship—how we respond to God’s gifts of life, our talents, nature, and Jesus himself—“what we do after we say, ‘we believe.’” A session on mission begins with Jesus’ mission statement in his hometown synagogue (Luke 4) and then asks “What does this mean for us in this place and in this time?” *New Wine, New Wineskins* concludes, launching into a new direction, with a final session on the New Evangelization as participants reflect on their own encounter with Christ even as they discuss how to bring that encounter to others.

As parishioners meet for faith sharing, *New Wine, New Wineskins* allows them to build together on their journey together into a new phase of parish life. This new period of the community’s existence is a movement into new life in Christ—New Wineskins for New Wine.

Jeffry Odell Korgen

Jesus Christ: In Our Hearts, in Our Lives

Suggested Environment

Set up a Bible, crucifix, and candle along with an icon of the parish patron saint on a small table, with the Bible open to the scripture text for this session. If an icon of the parish patron saint is not available consider displaying an item that represents the parish, such as a copy of the parish bulletin.

Gather

Allow a few moments for members of the group to briefly introduce themselves. The leader should start and then invite the other members in turn to give their names, state how long they have been with the parish, and add any family information they wish to share. At this time, the leader should review the guidelines for sharing (see page xv) and then ask members to respond to the following sentence stems....

- When I heard about the parish restructuring process, I felt
- As we begin *New Wine, New Wineskins*, I feel

Sometimes naming or describing a feeling is difficult. These words may help participants describe their feelings:

Sad	Scared	Angry	Guilty
Lonely	Confused	Jealous	Relieved
Hopeful	Excited	Loving	Caring
Disappointed	Hurt	Determined	Better
Understood	Grateful	Satisfied	Curious
Frustrated	Enraged	Lonely	Anxious

Song Suggestion

"In the Arms of Jesus," John Angotti (World Library Publications)

Track 1, *New Wine, New Wineskins* virtual CD

Invitation to Pray

Pray together:

**Almighty God,
we thank you for the great gift
of your son, Jesus Christ,
in whose friendship we draw close to you
and through whose sacrifice and resurrection
we receive the grace of divine life.
May we joyfully meet him in the Eucharist,
in the assembly of your people,
wherever we may gather in his name.
We ask this through the same Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

Reflection I: The Light of Christ

Jim Schomonta returned home to Minnesota in 2003 after a career in sales in upstate New York. As a parishioner in the Diocese of Syracuse, he observed the typical range of parish restructuring: mergers, closings, and priests leading more than one parish. In Minnesota, in the Diocese of St. Cloud, he found mostly small country parishes—each with its own pastor. But the priest shortage loomed large, and rural depopulation was taking its toll. "When they started talking about restructuring, it made sense to me," he recalled.

In 2007, St. Cloud Bishop John Kinney called together representatives from five parishes in Sherburne County, Minnesota, to recommend possible solutions to these challenges. As a member of the parish pastoral council, Jim was asked to represent St. Edward Parish of Princeton, Minnesota. Group members quickly bonded over their shared task, though when they returned to their home parishes they found a few irate parishioners despairing over potential changes.

“To some people, the church is the building, but to me the church is the people,” Jim explained. “I understood their feelings to a degree, but I thought it was a little extreme. They kept saying ‘This is my church!’ —that sort of thing.”

After a year and a half of study and prayer, the joint planning group made a recommendation, soon embraced by Bishop Kinney: St. Edward Parish would merge with its neighbor, St. Pius X, nine miles to the south, forming a new parish (later named Christ Our Light) with north and south campuses. Discussion then turned to the future of the other parishes, and St. Edward and St. Pius X parishes began a two-year merger process.

Bucking regional trends, Christ Our Light Parish is now expanding its membership. According to Jim, “This is mostly due to our dynamic young pastor, Fr. Kevin Anderson.” Jim estimates seven to eight percent of the members of St. Edward’s Parish left with bitterness after the merger was announced, but most parishioners responded to efforts such as special prayers, open meetings, one-on-one consultations, a rotating Mass schedule, and the writing of a joint mission statement.

Two years after the merger, Jim sees positive energy and growth, in spite of the departure of some parishioners. He believes—as a fellow council member, Kori Crippes, observed to the diocesan newspaper—“There is light at the end of the tunnel, and the light is Christ.”

Scripture/The Word of God

Luke 5:27-39, *“No one pours new wine into old wineskins”*

Sharing Questions

1. Take a moment to reflect on what word, phrase, or image from the scripture passage touches your heart or speaks to your life. Reflect on this in silence, or share it aloud.
2. Reflection 1 and this short scripture passage present several examples of change, of conversion, of old and new. In what ways do you feel that your life in the Church is dynamic and moving forward? In what ways do you feel it is stale or stagnant?

Reflection 2: Signs of New Wine

New wine, new wineskins. How strange the term “wineskins” sounds to our modern ears. Wineskins were the vessels that carried fermented grape juice in Jesus’ time, as

common as wine bottles today. As old wine continued to ferment, the skins would become stretched to their limits and could not be reused for new wine, as we might today recycle a wine bottle. Jesus' parable of the wineskins appears in three Gospels, indicating its importance to the early Church. Scholars traditionally have understood the old and new wineskins as representing the Jewish faith of Jesus' time and the new way in which he is leading his disciples.

Today, we can look at the wineskins in Jesus' metaphor as vessels of the Church, its structures of dioceses and parishes, into which the wine—the faithful—are poured. Many changes have occurred that suggest we are living in a time of New Wine. The migration of people around the world has produced dramatic population changes. A wave of secularization has reduced church attendance in parts of the United States, most strongly in the Pacific Northwest and the Northeast. A significant increase in Hispanic/Latino and Asian populations has also introduced youth, vitality, and new Catholic communities to some areas of our country. With some areas losing Catholic population and others gaining, we can understand today's changing and diversified Catholic population as New Wine.

As Catholic bishops have responded to the reality of a changing Catholic population and to other concerns, such as the shortage of priests, some of their decisions have resulted in discord. For example, some parishioners have questioned whether dioceses have closed churches simply to absorb the parishes' assets. However, a 2006 Vatican ruling ensures that parish assets follow the people of the parish to their new spiritual home. Yet sometimes it may seem as if it is "all about the money."

Restructuring parishes is supposed to be about caring for God's people. According to church law, chief among a bishop's duties is "the care of souls" in his diocese.

The New Wine—that is, the changing populations of parishes—presents new challenges in meeting the spiritual needs of God's people, challenges that must be met by reexamining and often by changing familiar parish structures. To ignore the challenge is to risk further deterioration and even disintegration of parishes.

As you begin *New Wine, New Wineskins*, you may feel sad, angry, or hopeful, or experience any number of other emotions about the changes that have come to your parish and the possibility of even more changes. There is nothing wrong with any of these feelings as long as they do not prevent us from remembering why we are devoted to our parishes—our love for and commitment to Jesus Christ.

As we begin this journey together, it's important to remind ourselves why we are Jesus' disciples. In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium*) Pope Francis writes that the joy of our faith comes from our encounter with Jesus Christ. This encounter "blossoms into an enriching friendship," Pope Francis writes, "we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being."

Keeping our focus on Jesus and coming back to encounters with him is essential—both for the further development of our faith and for the success of any parish restructuring effort. At the heart of this encounter with Jesus is the powerful experience of conversion—the changes we experience in our hearts and in our lives when we are centered on Christ. Conversion is at the heart of the Christian experience. For many people, the changes wrought by conversion—often gradual, sometimes sudden—are the most profound events of their lives. As we consider changes to church structures, this insight may help to guide us

"Our faith is not a building," it is often said. That statement is true, but it does not deny the impact a parish church can have on us. Churches are where the most holy events of our lives take place—baptisms, weddings, funerals, reconciliation—and of course a church is where we join the assembly for celebration of the Eucharist. Churches mediate our experiences of God. In the familiar surroundings of these churches, our fellow parishioners have accompanied us in these moments of grace and challenge, helping us to see ourselves as part of a family of believers striving together to become more committed disciples. It's understandable if we want to maintain what has been comfortable for us, but our Church can remain vibrant only if it responds to changing times.

Sharing our Faith

1. Recall a personal conversion experience. How is your life different because of your relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. When have you felt that you encountered the person of Jesus Christ as you have worshiped and participated in the ministries of your parish? How has parish life changed for you?

Invitation to Act

Jesus emphasized the connection between faith and action, between what we believe and what we do. In that spirit, decide on an individual or group action that flows from what you

have shared in this session. If you decide to act on your own, share your decision with the group. If you decide on a group action, determine among you which individual members will take responsibility for various aspects of the action.

You are more likely to benefit from taking an action that arises from your own response to the session. However, you can consider one of the following examples or use these ideas to help develop one of your own.

1. Engage yourself in the life of your parish in a new way this week. Say hello to someone you have seen at Mass but with whom you have not yet spoken, introduce yourself to a fellow parishioner, offer to take an elderly neighbor to Mass with you.
2. Prepare for next Sunday's Mass by prayerfully reading and reflecting on the scripture readings during the week.

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

**O God, we see the signs of your presence among us
in everything you have created.**

Inspire us with an eagerness to be disciples of your son, Jesus Christ.

**Show us how to be sensible as well as imaginative,
servants as well as leaders, co-workers as well as friends.**

**Open our hearts as we engage in these conversations
about the future of our parish and your Church.**

**Help us to honor the holy in what is changing
and what is coming into being.**

**Bless us, inspire us, and lead us with your Holy Spirit
as we envision New Wineskins for New Wine.**

**We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.**

Closing Song

*"Christ the Icon," Cooney, Daigle, Donohoo (World Library Publications)
Track 2, New Wine, New Wineskins virtual CD*

Next Steps

Prepare for the next session by prayerfully reading:

- Session 2—The Church: The People of God
- 1 Peter 2:1-5, God's House and People
- The Introduction to *New Wine, New Wineskins: A Faith-Sharing Resource for Restructuring Parishes*, page vii

Circle, highlight, or make note of words or sentences that are meaningful to you.

Bring a symbol of your faith with you to the next meeting, and prepare to briefly explain how your faith has grown in the parish.