

## Study Guide and Reflection Questions for Dr. Elaine Heath Lecture



### Northwind Seminary

Inaugural Lecture

### Bob & Dottie Duncan Distinguished Lecture Series

“Marks of the *Nextchurch* of the New Reformation”

by Dr. Elaine A. Heath, Ph.D.

*eco-theologian, preacher/teacher, noted author, and new community leader*

The Bob & Dottie Duncan Distinguished Lecture Series, endowed by a gift from the Duncan family, features distinguished ministerial leaders from whom local pastors and lay leaders can learn new and bold ways to be in ministry together in this new era.



*“Elaine Heath is a leading scholar of emergence [Christianity], the process by which religious faith finds new life outside familiar institutional forms...”*

*--President Emeritus Richard Brodhead, Duke University*

*“She has the gift of reading the signs of the times...As a preacher, teacher, writer, and retreat leader, I am convinced that she is a prophet ahead of her time, and the church will be blessed by taking her seriously!” -- Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, United Methodist Church*

*“If John Wesley is the father of Methodism, Elaine Heath is the mother of its 21st century version,” --Beth Estock, author of Weird Church, and Discernment*

**Introduction:**

“We are at the forefront of a new reformation,” writes Elaine Heath, “one that is freeing the Christian faith from the sinful structures of patriarchy and classism, and exploitive forms of mission and evangelism. The new reformation,” she says, “is all about the emergence of a generous, hospitable, equitable form of Christian practice that heals the wounds of the world.”

As you listen to Dr. Heath’s lecture in three movements, in the context of forest, farm and intentional community, note at least five marks or distinctive qualities of the emerging Church in the new era. Afterward, add two marks of your own.

**As you view the lecture and prepare to discuss it with colleagues, take notes in the spaces provided below:**

*--first movement, in which Dr. Heath introduces the themes of the future church that heals the wounds of Christendom*

*--second movement, in which Dr Heath presents in detail the five marks of communities that heal the wounds of Christendom*

*--third movement, in which Dr. Heath offers John O'Donohue's poem, "Grace for a New Beginning," from To Bless the Space Between Us (New York: Random House, 2008), 13-14.*

### **Reflection Questions:**

- Why does Dr. Heath believe that a new Awakening, a great Emergence, a new Reformation is underway?
- Specifically, what aspects and systems of the current church and culture are in need of re-formation and transformation?
- If God is doing a “new thing” in the world today (Isa. 43:19), what might be the ‘signs of the times’ for the church to perceive?
- What makes a place sacred?
- How is Spring Forest an “icon of the world”?
- What are “crimes against nature”?

- How has the Church hurt the natural world, and how shall it try to save it now?
- What are “Eco-evangelism” and “Green theology”?
- What is trauma-informed, eco-justice driven worship and mission?
- Reflect on Sally McFague’s metaphor of Earth as the Body of God.
- How can non-human creatures serve as wisdom teachers for people?
- Why does Dr. Heath make the claim that the Hymn of Kenosis is the premier text of Scripture for the Church that heals the wounds of Christendom?
- What are the ramifications of reading the story of Adam and Eve through the lens of “the least of these”?

- What are the ramifications for evangelism if it is based on God’s commitment to make all things new (Rev. 21:5), and to heal original wounds and transform *han* (Andrew Park), rather than trying to shame, guilt, judge, and terrify people into heaven?
- What did Bonhoeffer say about the future of the Church, and what did he mean by a “new monasticism that has nothing in common with the old other than a radical commitment to live the Sermon on the Mount.” What did he mean by the creation of a “new humanity” and a “church for others”?

### **The Five Marks of the Church that Heals the Wounds of Christendom**

- Communities that Heal the Earth
- Communities that Reflect a God Who is Like Jesus
- Communities of Belonging
- Communities that Give Themselves Away
- Communities of Wounded Healers

Add two additional marks that you think will be necessary for the Next Church:

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**Rev. Elaine A. Heath, Ph.D.**  
***Theologian, Author, Speaker, Consultant***  
***President, Neighborhood Seminary***  
***Abbess to the Community at Spring Forest***

Dr. Elaine Heath's scholarly work is interdisciplinary, integrating pastoral, biblical, and spiritual theology in ways that bridge the gap between academy, church, and world. Her current research interests focus on community as a means of healing trauma, emergent forms of Christianity, and alternative forms of theological education for the church in rapidly changing contexts.



Heath is the author of eleven books and numerous articles, the most recent of which are *Loving the Hell Out of Ourselves (and others)*, co-authored with Jeanine Heath-McGlinn (2021), *The Healing Practice of Celebration* (2020), *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse: Reading the Bible with Survivors* (2019), a republication with updates of a previous volume: *We Were the Least of These: Reading the Bible with Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (2011). Her other publications include *Five Means of Grace: Experience God's Love the Wesleyan Way* (2017), *The Mystic Way of Evangelism, Revised and Updated 2nd Edition* (2017), *God Unbound: Wisdom from Galatians for the Anxious Church* (2016), *Missional.Monastic.Mainline* (co-authored with Larry Duggins, 2014), *Longing for Spring: A New Vision for Wesleyan Communities* (co-authored with Scott Kisker, 2010), and *Naked Faith: The Mystical Theology of Phoebe Palmer* (2009).

Heath's vocational journey includes having served as Dean of the Divinity School at Duke University, and the McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. She is a pioneer in new forms of theological education. In that capacity Heath is co-founder of the Missional Wisdom Foundation, a non-profit educational organization that equips clergy and laity to develop diverse forms of Christian community and social enterprise. Heath is also the co-founder and President of Neighborhood Seminary, a contextualized model of missional theological education for laity. Heath is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and served in pastoral ministry prior to her academic ministry. She lives with her husband at Spring Forest, an intentional Christian Community and farm in rural North Carolina where she serves as Abbess.

[www.elaineaheath.org](http://www.elaineaheath.org)  
[www.neighborhoodseminary.org](http://www.neighborhoodseminary.org)  
[www.springforest.org](http://www.springforest.org)

For more on the Next Church of the new Reformation see Dr. Elaine A. Heath,  
"A Third Great Awakening, What is God Doing?"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Y7XXEUjekM>