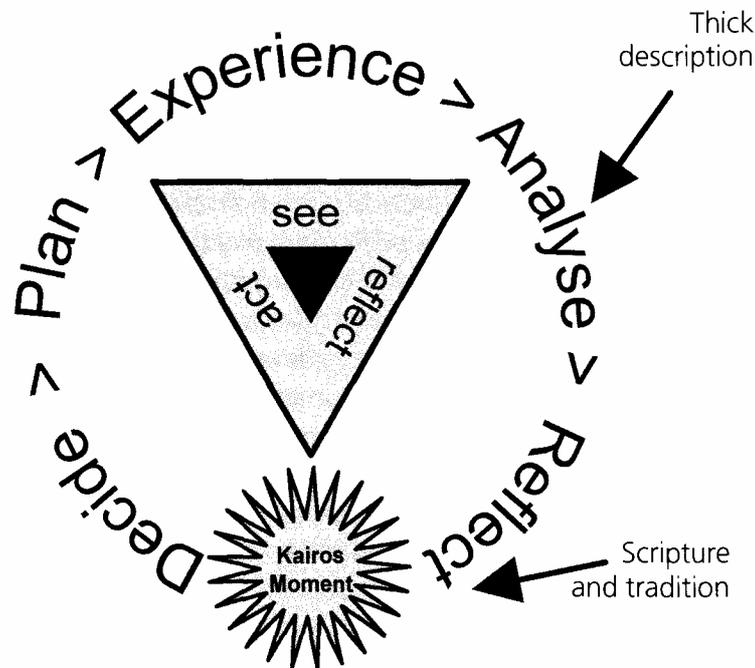


The Pastoral Cycle

Theological reflection is a process of coming to know God through reflecting on God's world in the light of resources from the tradition. The process can be described as follows:

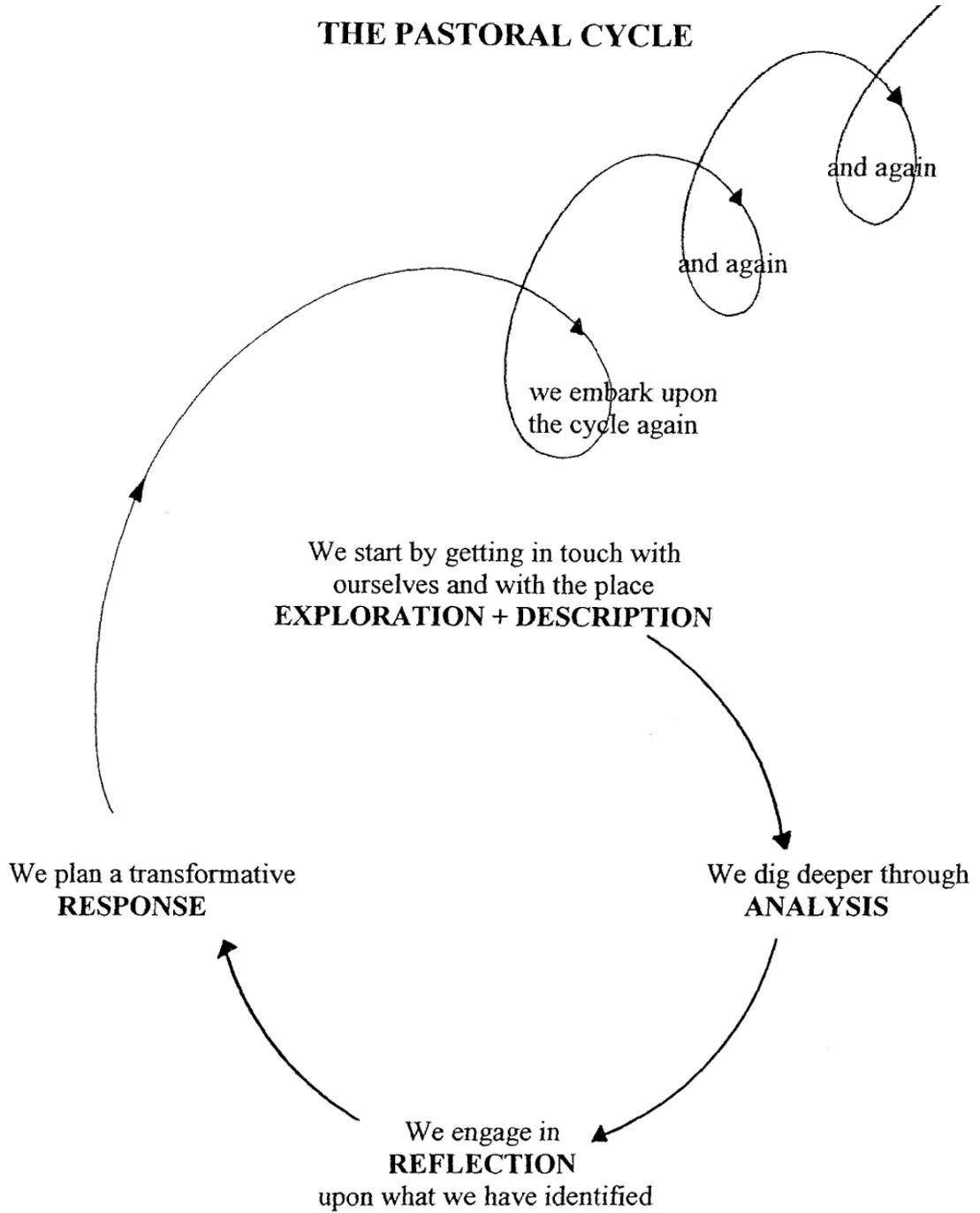


Going round the circle from the top, the key stages are:

- 1 paying attention to the situation, to my point(s) of view, to other points of view.
- 2 asking critical questions - historical, sociological, psychological and economic
- 3 engaging in dialogue with the Christian tradition (and other traditions).
- 4 reflecting prayerfully and weaving together the different strands of experience and theological tradition. There will also be a moment of insight (the kairos) enabling the move from reflection to action.
- 5 following this through in reflective action.
- 6 leading on to a new situation, so the cycle moves on in what is effectively a spiral (*cf* Laurie Green's spiral overleaf).

Though the diagrams and descriptions of the pastoral cycle vary, it is essentially the same process being described.

THE PASTORAL CYCLE



USING THE PASTORAL CYCLE

1. Naming the Experience: choosing an event on which to reflect

Choose an event, a moment, a conversation or a situation. As you recall the event, ask yourself:

- *What happened?*
- *Who was involved?*
- *What did you do or say?*

2. Exploring the Experience: finding another layer to the event

To explore another layer in this event, ask yourself:

- *How did you feel?*
- *What challenged, stimulated, or disturbed you?*
- *What was happening for others in the situation?*

3. Digging Deeper: expanding your thinking

To discover another layer of reflection, ask yourself:

- *What do you think about the situation?*
- *What core values emerge as you think about this event?*
- *What values are different from yours?*
- *What social issues, power issues, or economic issues are at work?*

4. Making Faith Connections: finding God at work in this event

To make faith connections, ask yourself;

- *Where is God present for you in this situation?*
- *Where is God present for others?*
- *Does this event remind you of a Scripture passage, a hymn, or other resources from your faith tradition?*
- *What theological issues or themes are present?*
- *What traditions of church speak to this situation?*
- *Are you affirmed or challenged in your present actions or beliefs?*

5. Learning: naming your discoveries

To draw out what you have learned, ask yourself:

- *What questions still linger?*
- *Were you challenged to change present actions or beliefs?*
- *What have you learned about yourself?*
- *What have you learned about God?*
- *What do you need?*
- *What will you do now?*

6. Praying: taking time with God

To conclude your reflection, write a prayer emerging from reflection on this event

Adapted from : *Reflecting with God. Connecting Faith and Daily Life in Small Groups*
Abigail Johnson Alban Institute (2004)

BOOKS ON THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Recently published

- Graham, Elaine,
Walton, Heather and
Ward, Francis *Theological Reflection: Methods* SCM 2005
 Theological Reflection: Sources SCM 2007
- Paver, John *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry* Ashgate 2006
- Thompson, Judith *Theological Reflection* SCM Study Guide SCM Press 2008
- Walton, Roger
Jesus *The Reflective Disciple; learning to live as faithful followers of
in the twenty-first century* Epworth 2009

These two are classics

- Ballard, Paul and
Pritchard, John *Practical Theology in Action. Christian thinking in the service of
Church and Society* SPCK 1996
- Green, Laurie *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology*
Continuum 2009 (new edition)

And for with congregations

- Johnson, Abigail *Reflecting with God. Connecting Faith and Daily Life in Small
Groups* Alban 2004 www.alban.org
- Nash, Sally, Pimlott,
Jo and Nash, Paul *Skills for Collaborative Ministry* Chapter 4 SPCK 2008