

Q & A



Leading a Transforming Community *Foundations, Practices, and Strategies for Opening to God Together*

October 13, 2026 | \$25.99, 256 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4601-6

New Culminating Work from Ruth Haley Barton

What led you to write this latest book, *Leading a Transforming Community*?

Ruth Haley Barton: A desire to see churches and other intentional communities become transforming communities that discern and do the will of God.

What is the message at the heart of this book?

Ruth: The promise of spiritual transformation is central to the message of the gospel and therefore, central to the mission of the Church (big C); it not an elective, it is essential.

Describe your writing journey and where *Leading a Transforming Community* fits among your other books and work?

Ruth: Writing is one of the primary ways I attempt to make sense of the world and organize my thoughts around what I have experienced. I only write about what I have experienced, at least to some extent, and take very seriously Jesus' statement in John 3: "We speak of what we know, we testify to what we have seen." Since I have spent the last twenty-five years teaching and guiding transforming communities within the Transforming Center, I finally came to the place where I felt ready to write about it. It is culminating work in that everything else I have written fits under this umbrella and drills down into some aspect of the spiritual life that is significant for transforming communities. I have written a lot about personal spiritual practices, but the bigger vision has always been to call forth and cultivate communities of spiritual transformation that support and catalyze the process of spiritual transformation.

Why do you think so many church communities struggle to see real transformation?

Ruth: Spiritual transformation is, by its very nature, a patient, plodding process. This presents quite a challenge in a culture that prefers quick fixes, fast food, microwave ovens, and immediate answers and solutions at the touch of a screen. In addition, spiritual transformation is a rather mysterious process that relies on the work of the Holy Spirit and requires us to give up control. Most of us are very controlling—seeking safety in our (misguided) attempts to control ourselves and others—which works against the transformation process. Finally, real transformation confronts not only the false self of the individual, it also confronts false self-dynamics within systems like churches and other expressions of Christian community. Leaders and community members have a natural tendency to want to avoid this kind of disruption.

What is one first step that communities can take toward genuine spiritual transformation together?

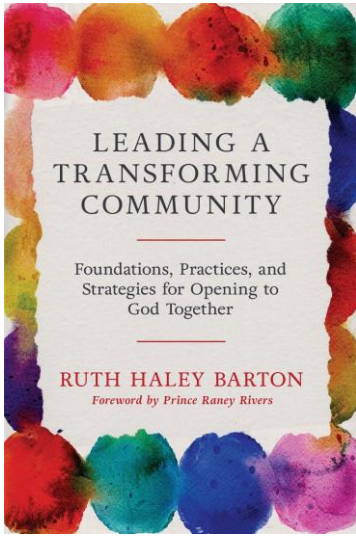
Ruth: The first step is always to help individuals and communities to get in touch with their deepest spiritual desires so they can arrange their life together for what they really want. If we skip this step, we run the risk of herding people through discipleship methods that are driven by "oughts" and "shoulds" rather than the authentic desires God has placed within us. External motivation will only last so long but being in touch with desire is a much deeper and more consistent source of motivation.



Krista Clayton, Director of Publicity
kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Q & A



Leading a Transforming Community *Foundations, Practices, and Strategies for Opening to God Together*

October 13, 2026 | \$25.99, 256 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4601-6

How do you hope churches and ministry organizations use *Leading a Transforming Community*?

Ruth: I hope leaders will engage this work first by reading the book and allowing themselves to be impacted on a personal level and then working through the study guide together to create space for discerning concrete steps for their communities.

What are the five main things you want readers to take away from your book?

Ruth:

- Clarity that spiritual transformation is central to the mission of the church and not an elective or a side issue.
- Develop shared understanding that spiritual transformation is the process of Christ being formed in us for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives, and for the sake of others.
- Become more conscious of the fact that it is possible to go to church all your life and do all the Christian things and still not change in deep and fundamental ways (this is born out through objective research) and grapple with what that means for their church or community.
- Recognize that spiritual formation is not merely about our own private devotion; to be experienced fully it must be lived in concentric circles of solitude, community, and mission.
- See that it is possible (and God-honoring) for whole communities to orient and organize their life together around sacred intentions and sacred rhythms that keep them open to God's transforming work.

How have transforming communities personally impacted your own spiritual formation over the years?

Ruth: It is easy to feel rather pious and humble in the presence of the almighty God. But in the presence of others, we have to face our self-centeredness, our compulsion to control others, our impatience, our limited capacity to love or even know what love means. I resemble that! In community, others become agents of God's troubling grace in my life, making it abundantly clear exactly where I need to open to God's transforming work. As my teacher, Bob Mulholland, has stated, left to ourselves we do not have the resources to sustain us in the disciplines and practices that open us to God's transforming work, but transforming community sustains us in the mystery of God, the mystery of our faith, and the mystery of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.



Krista Clayton, Director of Publicity
kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



BIO



Leading a Transforming Community
Foundations, Practices, and Strategies for Opening to God Together

October 13, 2026 | \$25.99, 256 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4601-6

In *Leading a Transforming Community*, spiritual formation thought leader Ruth Haley Barton shares insights from over twenty-five years of guiding leaders through the Transforming Center's transforming community experience. She casts a compelling vision for what is possible when a community gathers around the presence of Christ with the shared goal of spiritual transformation.

Transforming Center Founder, Spiritual Formation Thought Leader

Ruth Haley Barton (DD, Northern Seminary) is founder and Chief Essence Officer of the Transforming Center, a ministry dedicated to strengthening the souls of pastors, Christian leaders, and the congregations and communities they serve. A seasoned spiritual director (Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation) and sought-after teacher and retreat leader, she has served on the pastoral staff of several churches and teaches frequently at the graduate level. Educated at Wheaton College, Northern Seminary, and Loyola University Chicago Institute for Pastoral Studies, Ruth is the author of numerous books and resources on the spiritual life, including *Life Together in Christ*, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, *Sacred Rhythms*, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, and *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*. She reflects regularly on spirituality and leadership on the *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* podcast and in her *Beyond Words* Substack.

One of the great mysteries of my life growing up as a pastor's kid was the fact that many adults in the churches we attended—many of whom had been attending for many years—were just not changing. I couldn't help but notice that many of them remained selfish, stuck in their ways, and spiritually lifeless. I wondered, how can people go to church year after year, read the Bible, listen to sermons, participate in small groups—and yet change very little? And then as the years went by, I sometimes wondered the same thing about myself!

How do people change—really? This has been my question ever since. And not just a question but a quest—to find the treasure of spiritual transformation hidden in the field of our life together in Christ. Encountering the richness of the broader Christian tradition on my quest led me to reclaim practices and experiences spiritual seekers down through the ages have used to open themselves to God's transforming work and to explore ways of incorporating those into the lives of individuals and in communities as they gather. Over twenty-five years ago I founded the Transforming Center with a few like-minded souls. We gathered around a shared desire to experience deeper levels of spiritual transformation in Christ's presence. Based on this experience, we recognized a mission: to call forth and cultivate communities of men and women who gather around the presence of Christ for the purpose of spiritual transformation to discern and do the will of God. It also planted within me a desire to see churches and other purposeful communities become centers of spiritual transformation as well.

I have had the privilege of studying under many wonderful teachers in many respected institutions, but the most valuable preparation for doing what I do now has been my training in spiritual direction (Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation) so many years ago. In whatever context I find myself—writing, teaching, preaching, retreat leading—I am always present as a spiritual director, trying to sense what God is doing in the lives of individuals and in the life of the community, and drawing attention to that so that we can align ourselves with it.



ivpress.com/media



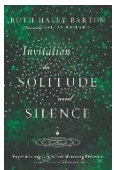
Transforming Resources® Books by Ruth Haley Barton

Spiritual Growth Tools for Leaders and Their Communities

The following legacy of Ruth Haley Barton’s books are included among the Transforming Resources®, created in partnership with the Transforming Center.

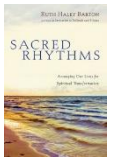
The Transforming Center, founded by Barton, has been strengthening the souls of pastors, Christian leaders, and the congregations and organizations they serve since 2001, reaching over 500,000 leaders so far. Whether you are a pastor, business leader, elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, board member, or a leader in your home, the best thing you bring to leadership is your own transforming self and Transforming Resources® books help you do just that.

A Legacy of Books by Ruth Haley Barton



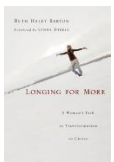
2004
Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God’s Transforming Presence

Ruth invites you to meet God deeply and fully outside the demands and noise of daily life. In this book you find chapters on topics like finding rest for the body, mind, and soul, an expanded edition published in **2010** that includes a discussion guide for groups, and spiritual practices to help you learn to practice silence as an individual or in groups.



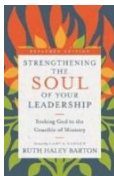
2006
Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation

Drawing from the monastic tradition of creating a rule of life, this book equips readers to integrate spiritual disciplines into their everyday routines, paving the way for authentic spiritual transformation that can only be brought about by God.



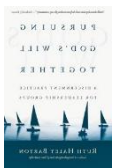
2007
Longing for More: A Woman’s Path to Transformation in Christ

With wisdom and charity Barton’s exhilarating book explores the many areas of a woman’s life that need the freeing touch of Christ such as vocation, relationships, spirituality, identity, sexuality, singleness, marriage, and motherhood. She affirms our longings as important markers which point us toward God’s renewing love.



2008
Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry

With an expanded version released in **2018**, this book weaves together contemporary illustrations with penetrating insights from the life of Moses to help ministry leaders care for their own souls so that they may in turn minister well to others.



2012
Pursuing God’s Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups

Church boards and other Christian leadership teams have long relied on models adapted from the business world. Ruth Haley Barton, president of the Transforming Center, helps teams transition to a better model—a spiritual community that discerns God’s will together.



Krista Clayton, Director of Publicity
kclayton@ivpress.com

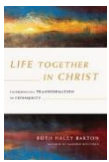


Transforming Resources® Books by Ruth Haley Barton

Spiritual Growth Tools for Leaders and Their Communities

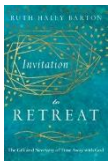
The following legacy of Ruth Haley Barton’s books are included among the Transforming Resources®, created in partnership with the Transforming Center.

The Transforming Center, founded by Barton, has been strengthening the souls of pastors, Christian leaders, and the congregations and organizations they serve since 2001, reaching over 500,000 leaders so far. Whether you are a pastor, business leader, elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, board member, or a leader in your home, the best thing you bring to leadership is your own transforming self and Transforming Resources® books help you do just that.



2014
Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community

Reflecting on the story of the two disciples who meet Christ on the Emmaus Road, Ruth Haley Barton offers this interactive guide for small groups of spiritual companions who are ready to encounter Christ in transforming ways—right where they are on the road of real life.



2018
Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God

Based on her own practice and her experience leading hundreds of retreats for others, Ruth guides you in a very personal exploration of seven specific invitations contained within the general invitation to retreat.



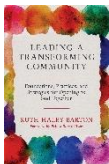
2022
Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest: From Sabbath to Sabbatical and Back Again

Sharing her own story of practicing sabbath for the past twenty years, Ruth Haley Barton offers hard-won wisdom regarding the rhythms of sabbath, exploring both weekly sabbath keeping as well as extended periods of sabbatical time.



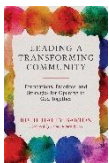
2023
Sabbath Journal: What Your Soul Wants to Say to God—Lined Blank Journal with Prompts in Back

Paired with Ruth Haley Barton’s book *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*, this journal is primarily a blank space for your thoughts, offering fifty-two prompts at the back of the journal to help guide your Sabbath reflections and engage in honest dialogue with God.



2026
Leading a Transforming Community: Foundations, Practices, and Strategies for Opening to God Together

This seminal work is an essential resource for pastors, small group leaders, and leaders of all Christian communities who believe that change and transformation should be the norm, not the exception.



2026
Leading a Transforming Community Study Guide: Six Sessions for Personal Reflection, Group Conversation, and Next Steps

For pastors, leaders, and anyone longing to experience deeper levels of transformation in their life with others, this six-session study guide is the essential companion to *Leading a Transforming Community*.



Krista Clayton, Director of Publicity
kclayton@ivpress.com