



TREK

Spiritual Development Programme
For Staff in Anglican Schools

Part One

Journey

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Welcome to Trek

TREK has been created to help those working in Anglican Schools explore their spirituality.

Spirituality is an important part of human wellbeing. It is a key part of the human search for meaning that all people participate in. This search helps us to live happy and fuller lives. Spirituality is recognised in the Bible as a fundamental aspect of human life that connects us with God, with each other and with the world. It is also an important part of education. Young people are at a formative stage of life. Schools have an important role to play in the development of their spirituality. Spiritual development is increasingly seen as an important part of education including here in Australia. The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* states:

“Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion.”

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)

TREK is open to all people. It is firmly embedded in the Christian faith and is shaped by it. It focuses on the development of personal spirituality within a community and encourages participants to practice spiritually constructive action in the school.

The program is sensitive to the various spiritual starting places of school staff including the deeply spiritual, the curious but cautious seeker, the agnostic, the committed Anglican and those of other denominations and traditions.

There are four parts to the program each with a different theme: journey, growth, community and habit. Each part has five sessions. TREK is designed with a group journey in mind and can be completed over the course of a year meeting together every two weeks during term time or by meeting more regularly.

We hope you enjoy the journey.

Welcome to Part 1 of Trek

- The theme for Part 1 is Journey.
- For each of the group meetings, you prepare a “challenge” that requires you to think about the theme in a particular way. During the challenge, you choose an artefact to bring to the next meeting.

The challenge prior to meeting one.

In the fortnight prior to your first meeting, read the following and complete:

When we have made a huge effort to improve, change or add a habit or discipline to our lives, we often feel that should be it. Effort exerted, change and improvement should be immediate, surely! Just as physical fitness or housework requires constant attention, spiritual development is something that needs regular attention. We draw on our past inspiration, and actively work at creating the space/attitude for inspiration to continue.

Artefact: your photo/memento and story from the trip.

- Identify a journey that changed or influenced you. This is an actual physical trip, to the shops where you met an interesting person, or overseas where you learnt from a new culture. Take time to remember the details, share some stories with your family/friends.
- Find a photo or memento you are happy to share, or
- Rehearse a story from this trip that you can share with the group.

Choose a reading from the material from next week (p 9 - 13) and gather your ideas.

- Read the passage with the focus question in mind.
- Complete the questions below the reading.

Journal:

- Identify other ways you have intentionally formed your spirit. Consider disciplines from other traditions, including yoga, meditation, walking, retreats, prayer groups.
- What did you learn from these?
- What did you hope to find?
- Name one insight you have for others.
- Who has been influential for you in your spiritual development? This could be a generous spirited person, or even someone who has mentored you intentionally.



Journey Week 1

Order of activities for the meeting

1. Do the gathering activity.
2. Discuss your artefacts.
3. Discuss what you gained from the Readings
 4. Conclusion
 5. Actions for Next Meeting

Gathering activity

Practice drawing a 7-Fold Labyrinth.

You will need

A3 paper

Pens/pencils

How to draw a labyrinth

To draw a seven-circuit classical labyrinth, just follow these steps.



Draw a cross



Add a curve in each corner



Add a dot in each corner



Each point will be connected with the corresponding number



1. Use this figure as your starting point



2. Connect top with righthand curve (1 to 1)



3. Connect lefthand curve with righthand dot (2 to 2)



4. Connect righthand curve with top lefthand dot (3 to 3)



5. Connect righthand bar of cross with lefthand curve (4 to 4)



6. Connect righthand curve with left hand bar of cross (5 to 5)



7. Connect lefthand curve with bottom righthand dot (6 to 6)



8. Connect righthand curve with bottom lefthand dot (7 to 7)



9. Connect lefthand curve with bottom lower arm of the cross (8 to 8)

Discussion while drawing

- Labyrinths are pre-Christian, and have been used by Christians as a tool in meditation.
- They represent the journey of the soul as we progress through life.
- While mazes have options and are essentially puzzles, labyrinths have only one path.
- Many who experience a labyrinth find it surprising. Others find a sense of calm, as there is no need to make decisions about the route, but merely to trust the path. The participant may concentrate on the physical process of walking/drawing, and the prayer they repeat as they go.
- Stepping your way out of the labyrinth requires deliberate choice and a commitment to the path.
- Drawing a labyrinth can be a meditative process.

Once you have completed a labyrinth of your own, follow these steps to transform your paper into a meditation tool.

Approaching the Labyrinth:

- Prepare yourself at the start and use the way in to release,
- Trace the route with your pen or finger
- Use your time in the centre to receive,
- Use your outward journey to return.

Come with no agenda but to trace and see what happens - Be open and peaceful.

See the appendix (p 16) for other ideas about creating and using a large labyrinth for walking.

Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

Identify a journey that changed or influenced you. This is an actual physical trip, to the shops where you met an interesting person, or overseas where you learnt from a new culture. Take time to remember the details, share some stories with your family/friends.

Find a photo or memento you are happy to share, or

Rehearse a story from this trip that you can share with the group.

Artefact: your photo/memento and story from the trip.

The group shares stories from the challenge

- Each participant has the opportunity to show their artefact and to tell their story of journeying.
- While someone is speaking, their artefact is the “talking stick”...this allows the speaker uninterrupted time to tell their story.
- Agree beforehand how much time each person has and allow time for comments and questions at the end.
- Ensure that each participant has a chance to share.

Readings and discussion

- As part of your preparation for today's session, you will have read and considered one or more of the following readings.
- Contribute to a group discussion on the ideas.
- Identify the reading you chose and discuss the insights you gained.

Reading 1

As you read this passage from Luke's gospel, imagine the various journeys these disciples have undertaken – emotional, physical, spiritual and social.

Background: On the day that Jesus rose from the dead, two of his disciples took a journey to the Village of Emmaus. They were in shock and deeply saddened by the tragic turn of events. They had expected to live a revolutionary life with Jesus as their leader, and only three days before, they had watched him die. The group of followers was in disarray, traumatised. Their faith in their own purpose was shattered. Alongside esoteric concerns, they grieved for the violent death of their friend and mentor Jesus. As they travelled, they were joined by a man who seemed very wise, and explained about the Messiah. They did not know to whom they were talking, but they knew he was special, and invited him to stay with them.

Luke 24:13-35 New International Version (NIV) - On the Road to Emmaus

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about 11 kilometres from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how they recognised Jesus when he broke the bread.

1. Identify three elements of the passage from Luke's Gospel that strike you as interesting.

2. What are two insights you gained about the disciples' journey?

3. Identify one question you have about the disciples' journey to Emmaus.



Reading 2

As you read this short biography, be aware of the journey involved in moving homes, of losing and finding a place to call home.

Parker, Francis Belle. *The Journey*. 2000. (winner of the Blake Prize 2000)

Frances Belle Parker is a Yaegl woman who works in a variety of media including painting, printmaking and installation. The majority of her work is based around her personal connection to the Yaegl landscape of northern New South Wales. She won the 2000 Blake Prize for Religious Art, the first Aboriginal artist to win this award.

Painter, drawer, printmaker and installation artist Frances Belle Parker was born in 1982 in Dubbo, New South Wales. She is from the Yaegl people of northern New South Wales. Her mother, Lenore Parker, grew up on Ulgundahi Island in the Clarence River near Maclean on the New South Wales north coast and it was to Maclean that the family returned when Parker was still in pre-school. Ulgundahi Island was established as an Aboriginal Mission when the Scottish settlers moved into the surrounding area in the late 1800s. The Aboriginal people of this area and from as far away as Nambucca and Bowraville (NSW) were moved off their lands and onto the island. On the island the people were able to live a relatively 'free' existence. They were able to continue their traditional practices even though they were under the ever-vigilant eye of the Aboriginal Protection Board. It is because of this continued cultural life that Ulgundahi contains many places of Aboriginal significance and claims a women's sacred site.

Parker began her artistic career in 2000, the same year she won the Blake Prize for Religious Art with an acrylic on canvas work titled *The Journey*. She was the youngest person and first Aboriginal artist to win this award. *The Journey* depicted a stylised Rainbow Serpent raising itself high with a Christian crucifix surrounded in a glowing light sitting atop the serpent's head.

https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/version_history/frances-belle-parker/biography/?p=2



1. Describe your reactions to this image, and to the artist's story.

2 What are 2 insights you gained from this biography and artwork?

3. If you could ask Francis Belle Parker one question about her journey, what would it be?

Reading 3

As you read McGrath's summary of the Biblical theme of Journeying, keep in mind your own experience of life as a journey.

McGrath, Alister, E., Christian Spirituality, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1999. pp. 91-93 Pages 91-93

The Journey

Both Old and New Testaments depict journeys, such as Abraham's journey to Canaan, or Paul's great missionary journeys. Perhaps the two most important journeys described in the Old Testament are the wandering of the people of Israel through the wilderness for forty years, prior to emerging into the Promised Land, and the return of the people of Jerusalem to their native city after decades of exile in the great city of Babylon. Each of these journeys has become an image of considerable importance for Christian spirituality.

One of the most powerful images of the Christian life is that of a journey. Indeed, the New Testament records that the early Christians initially referred to themselves as followers of "the way" (see, for example, Acts 9:2; 24:14). Just as God led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt into the Promised Land, so the Christian life can be seen as a slow process of deliverance from bondage to sin before being led triumphantly into the heavenly city.

At several points in the writings of St Paul, we find a modification of the image of a journey. For Paul, the Christian life is like a race - a long and arduous journey, undertaken under pressure, in which the winners receive a crown (see Galatians 2:2; 2 Timothy 4:7).

The image is also used in the letter to the Hebrews, which urges its readers to persevere in the race of life by keeping their eyes focussed firmly on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2). This image allows Paul to stress the importance of discipline in the Christian life.

Before setting out on a journey, it is usually thought to be wise to get hold of a map, which will indicate how to get to the desired destination. In the case of spirituality, the "map" in question is the shared experience of the many Christians who have undertaken this journey before us, and passed down to us their wisdom, knowledge, and encouragement. Engaging with others - whether by reading books, or by spending time with others trying to live out the Christian life, whether alone or in groups - is one of the most helpful ways of leading the Christian life.

One of the best ways of gaining encouragement on a long journey is to anticipate one's arrival. This means picturing one's final destination, anticipating the joy of arrival, and picturing those who will be present. Many of the greatest works of Christian spirituality aim to encourage those on the journey by offering them a vision of the new Jerusalem, so that they will long to be there and savour its delights.

For most Christian writers, the journey of faith is not to be seen as an individual pilgrimage, but as a corporate achievement, in which those who are weak help the strong. The Christian journey is, and is meant to be, a corporate and supportive matter.

1. Identify three ideas from McGrath's summary that resonate with your idea of life as a journey.

2. Describe two insights about the nature of journeying in the Bible.

3. What question do you have about the idea that Christian Spirituality is often described in terms of a journey?

Before the next meeting

Challenge

- Find a hill and go up it, with the aim of experiencing the journey and appreciating the ascent.
- If walking is not an option, then drive and stop at the top. Cycle or run if you like.
- Attempt to do it with the journey in mind, not the time taken or heart rate achieved.

Journal

- Use your journal to record your reflections on the nature of ascent.
- What do you consider are the benefits/rewards of finding yourself at the top?

Collect an Artefact for next session

- This could be something you found on your journey to the top, a photo you took from the summit or a map of the route.

Choose a reading from the material from next week and gather your ideas

- Read the passage with the focus question in mind.
- Complete the questions below the reading.



Appendix

Note for the long term...

If you have time and space, consider constructing a temporary, walkable labyrinth as your group contribution to the school. Sally Welch, in her book *Walking the Labyrinth: A Spiritual and Practical Guide*, Canterbury Press, 2010, provides clear and detailed instructions about process and materials. There are also many online examples.

See the examples below, and consider other simple methods:

- Use flour to mark lines on an expanse of grass
- Use bamboo forks stuck in the ground to mark the lines.
- Use tent pegs to hold rope in place.



Journey Week 2

Order of activities for the meeting

1. Gathering activity.
2. Discuss your artefacts
3. Discuss what you learn from the Readings
4. Conclusion
5. Actions for Next Meeting

Gathering activity

You will need:

Cameras or phones

- Walk together to the highest point in the grounds. This may be a hill, or the top floor of a building.
- Play with the panorama settings on your phone cameras and capture the scene.
- Use the zoom function to investigate the scene. Notice if there are things you have not seen before.
- What does this new perspective offer?

Discussion while photographing.

- A journey is valuable for its own sake.
- We know that walking hard uphill can be tiring, yet ultimately rewarding and sometimes exhilarating.
- Spiritual development journeys sometimes involve difficult times of apparently little reward.
- Note if there is anything in the photographs that you hadn't noticed while looking at the view.



Discuss the artefacts

- Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting-
- Find a hill and go up it, with the aim of experiencing the journey and appreciating the ascent.
- If walking is not an option, then drive and stop at the top. Cycle or run if you like.
- Attempt to do it with the journey in mind, not the time taken or heart rate achieved.

Artefact:

This may be something you found on your journey to the top, a photo you took from the summit or a map of the route.

The group shares stories from the challenge -

- Each participant has the opportunity to show their artefact and to tell their story of journeying.
- While someone is speaking, their artefact is the “talking stick”...this allows the speaker uninterrupted time to tell their story.
- Agree beforehand how much time each person has and allow time for comments and questions at the end.

Readings and discussion

As part of your preparation for today’s session, you will have read and considered one or more of the following stimulus materials.

Contribute to a group discussion on the ideas.

Identify the reading you chose and discuss the insights you gained.

Reading 1

As you read this passage by M. Robert Mulholland Jnr., reflect on the nature of spiritual growth, that there are stages and phases, much like our physical development.

M. Robert Mulholland Jnr., Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation, InterVarsity Press, Indiana, 1993, pp.21-22.

The Reality of Process

Spiritual growth is, in large measure, patterned on the nature of physical growth. We do not expect to put an infant into its crib at night and in the morning find a child, an adolescent or yet an adult. We expect that infant to grow into maturity according to the processes that God has ordained for physical growth to wholeness. The same thing is true of our spiritual life.

Yes, there are spurts of growth in our spiritual development. A few years ago I had a little boy. Then, within a year, he became a man. He went through one of those adolescent growth spurts. He grew almost a foot in height, his voice dropped into a deep bass, he began to shave, his body filled out – he was a different person. The same thing happens in our spiritual life. For a while we may live on a plateau of life and relationship with God. Then one of those moments comes in which we experience a growth spurt and find ourselves on a new level of life and relationship with God. We experience God in a new and different way. We see ourselves and life in a new perspective. Old things pass away, and new things take their place. But if we mistake such a growth spurt for all there is in spirituality, then we are not prepared for the long haul toward spiritual wholeness.

We will tend to languish as we wait for another spurt to come along. Or we will try to reproduce the setting in which the previous spurt took place, hoping to create another such experience.

1. Identify three points from Mulholland's passage that you find interesting.

2. Describe two insights you gained from this passage.

3. Identify one question you have about the nature of spiritual growth and development as described by Mulholland.

Reading 2

C.S. Lewis makes the point that spiritual growth occurs whether we are intentional about it or not. Consider the choices we have as individuals who have turned our gaze upon our own development.

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, Macmillan, New York, 1960, pp. 86-87

Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.



1. Describe your emotional response to this passage.

2. What are two insights you note about the nature of spirituality as Lewis understands it?

3. If you could ask C.S Lewis a question about the nature of our development, what would it be?

Reading 3

Often people see the metaphorical mountains in their lives as problems or obstacles which need to be conquered. Nouwen encourages Spiritual seekers to relish the mountains as part of a journey. Slowly get to the top and savour the different perspective you earned.

Henri Nouwen, (from his course on Spiritual Formation at Yale Divinity School, 1980). Found in Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit, SPCK Publishing, London, 2011. P123-125.

Spiritual Formation, to use the words of Elizabeth O'Connor*, requires both a journey inward and a journey outward. The journey inward is the journey to find the Christ dwelling within us. The journey outward is the journey to find the Christ dwelling among us and in the world. The journey inward calls for the disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and attentiveness to the movements of our heart. The journey outward in community and mission calls for the disciplines of care, compassion, witness, outreach, healing, accountability, and attentiveness to the movement of other people's hearts. These two journeys belong together to strengthen each other and should never be separated.

The spiritual life presents opportunities to enter into the centre of our existence and to become familiar with the complexities of our own inner life. As soon as we feel at home in our own house – discover the dark corners as well as the light spots, the closed doors as well as the draughty rooms – our confusion will disappear, anxiety lessen, and creative work become possible.

The skills needed here are discernment and articulation. Those who can clearly discern and articulate the different movements of their inner lives, who can name the competing forces in their souls, confront their demons, and clarify their experiences do not have to remain victims of the process. Rather, they can slowly and confidently overcome the obstacles that prevent the Spirit from entering into the arena of struggle and create space for the One whose heart is greater than their own.

** Elizabeth O'Connor, Journey Inward, Journey Outward (Harper & Row, 1968).*

1. Identify three ideas which resonate with you and your own spiritual journey.

2. What insights about the nature of spirituality have you gained?

3. Frame a question from something that puzzles you about these concepts.



Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that Spiritual Development involves periods of rapid growth and new direction.

Spiritual
Development
is like a
Journey over
mountains

It is often impossible to see beyond the next twist or turn in the track, but the effort is worth it – we are afforded a new perspective, or an enlightened view.

Often from the top, there is a vantage point from which to wonder and breathe

From a height, it is often possible to see the whole track just travelled, and make sense of the effort and struggle

Before the next meeting

Challenge

- Map your life: draw a timeline with dates and events
- Or sketch pictures / images of your life
- Present it in any way you like
- Mark on the highlights: times that were worth the effort, the “mountain top experiences”.



Journal

- Describe a time when you've managed to carry on with the dreary trudging work without being certain of the result. This might include a course of study, a fitness regime, a New Year's Resolution, a difficult time in a relationship, or even continued leaps of faith until your belief was justified.
- Describe what it was like when this period was finished.
- Describe a time when you've been puzzled about the purpose or direction of your life.
- Describe the experience of looking back and seeing how that period became clear with hindsight.

Collect an Artefact for next session

- Your life map (see p 28)

Choose a reading from the material from next week and gather your ideas

- Read the passage with the focus question in mind.
- Complete the questions below the reading.

Journey Week 3

Order of activities for the meeting

1. Gathering activity.
2. Discuss your artefacts
3. Discuss what you gained from the Readings
4. Conclusion
5. Actions for Next Meeting

Gathering activity

You need:

- Prior to the meeting, identify a path that you can walk without interruption. This may be outside on a bikeway, or on a labyrinth, or mark out a walking track with chairs/desks inside a classroom.
- Background music – e.g.; Taize chants

Optional

- bowls of water to carry
- Flowers to float in the bowl.

- As each person arrives, discuss the challenge of walking meditation.
- Practise walking the track focussing initially on the action of your body.
- Allow the rhythmic movement to lead your thoughts away from yourself and open your heart to the world through which you move.
- Walk the same track while carrying a full bowl of water. This will slow you down and still your mind as you concentrate on only that which is required to keep the bowl steady.



Discussion

Walking Meditation has a long history in the Christian monastic traditions. It has an advantage over seated meditation, in that it can be practiced anywhere, while on your way somewhere, and without the need for quiet.

One of the reasons for practicing walking meditation is to illustrate that anything may become meditative, including our most mundane daily tasks, eating, drinking, and washing up. Walking helps the body relax, and focussing on your physical activity is a great way to practice focused prayer. Echoes of this practice appear in the Celtic Christian approach of weaving prayer into everyday activities.

Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

Challenge

- Map your life: draw a timeline with dates and events
- Or sketch pictures/images of your life
- Mark highlights: times that were worth the effort, the “mountain top experiences”.
- Mark the times when not much seemed to be happening, little growth was evident, or where you just had to put in the time until you moved onto a new phase.

Artefact

- Your life map

The group shares stories from the challenge -

- Each participant has the opportunity to show their artefact and to tell their story of journeying.
- While someone is speaking, their artefact is the “talking stick” ...this allows the speaker uninterrupted time to tell their story.
- Agree beforehand how much time each person has and allow time for comments and questions at the end.
- Ensure that each participant has a chance to share.

Readings and discussion

As part of your preparation for today’s session, you will have read and considered one or more of the following stimulus materials.

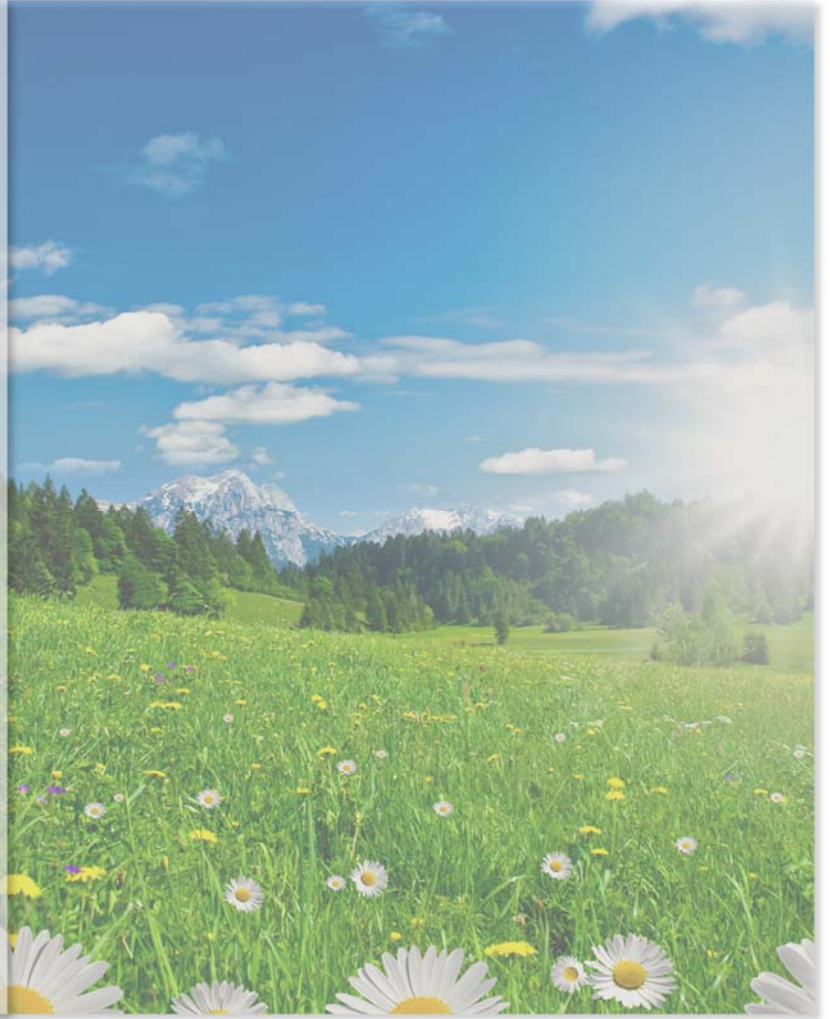
- Contribute to a group discussion on the ideas.
- Identify the reading you chose and discuss the insights you gained.

Reading 1

The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

R.S. Thomas



1. Describe your emotional response to this poem.

2. What truth does this poem illustrate?

2. Identify one question you have about this approach to valuing the ordinariness of life?

Reading 2

Paula Gooder, *Everyday God: The Spirit of the Ordinary*, Canterbury Press: 2012, pp. 5-6

Seeing where the treasure lies

As with so many things, the quality of the lives we live is shaped not so much by what we do but by how we do it. It is so easy to trudge through life, simply missing the gems and wonder of everyday existence, not because they are absent but because we don't notice them. I remember an occasion when my daughters were small, when one of them squealed in ecstasy, saying, 'Look, Mummy, look.' I looked and what I saw was a somewhat grubby patch of grass – with rather more mud than makes a parent, who has to do the washing, happy – which was dotted with a few, to my eye, miserable looking daisies. She hopped out of the pushchair and rushed over to them, and crouched down as low as she could get. 'Look,' she said, 'they've got pink edges right on the end, and the petals are like a fan and the yellow bit is all furry.'

She was, of course, right, as anyone who has examined a daisy up close will tell you. What she was even more right about was that the somewhat ordinary muddy patch of grass held a treasure which I had completely overlooked...we all too easily hurry past the pearls of great price that lie along our way because we simply don't recognize them for what they are. Our vision remains so dazzled by an imagined future glory or a rose-tinted memory of the past that we fail to notice what lies before our very eyes.

One of the great dangers of becoming too sucked into a culture that glories in everything new, bigger and better is that it can – indeed it seeks to – take the shine away from what we already have. If 'special' is what we aim for, then by extension 'ordinary' is disappointing. The problem with this is that sometimes – often in fact – the special is embedded deep within the ordinary but it takes a well-trained eye to notice it.

1. What is familiar to you in this description of an everyday encounter?

2. Describe an insight about the nature of spirituality, as Gooder understands it.

3. Imagine you had one chance to show your loved ones the treasure to be found in something "ordinary". Who would you choose to show, and what would you choose to show them?

Reading 3 - Psalm 23

1. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters
3. He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
4. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil: For you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

1. Identify where you have come across this psalm/song before. Describe the impact it had in that circumstance.

2. Describe the nature of the relationship between God and humanity as depicted in this psalm.

3. If you could ask the writer one question about this famous psalm, what would it be?



Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that Spiritual Development involves periods of sameness and routine.

Spiritual Development is like a journey where we find ourselves trudging to get from one place to another.

Spiritual Development is not always a spiritual high, or a mountain

There is no quick, fix, neither can we expect constant or instant gratification

However, the special can be right amidst the ordinary if we cultivate a mind and attitude of receptivity.

Travelling often leads to new and unexpected roads / ways of being.

Spiritual Development is as much about getting into a habit as is exercise. Change can be gradual, we may not be aware of the result instantly, but the new habit itself may be enough to ensure a growing strength that surprises us in times of need.

Before the next meeting:

Challenge

- Take 2 X 15 minute walks this week and practice walking meditation. Consider walking to or from work / part of the way.
- Consciously take this time to be alone. Be aware of silence and space. Observe how you feel when alone. Is it a relief, is it disconcerting?

Journal

- Remember a time you took time out to walk your own way, intentionally alone.
- Describe the benefits of your time alone.
- Describe the down side of being alone.

Collect an Artefact for next session

- Find something from your walks to bring to the group as a reminder or prompt about your experience.

Choose a reading from the material from next week and gather your ideas

- Read the passage with the focus question in mind.
- Complete the questions below the reading.

Journey Week 4

Order of activities for the meeting

1. Gathering activity.
2. Discuss your artefacts
3. Discuss what you learn from the Readings
4. Conclusion
5. Actions for Next Meeting

Gathering activity

Create an artistic expression of solitude.

You could proceed independently, or attempt a group product. If the latter, be prepared for negotiation and discussion over the interpretation of the topic.

You will need: one or more artistic media for example:

play dough

Paint and paper

Finger paint

Soft pencils and drawing paper

Polystyrene blocks and craft knives

Water colour pencils and paper

Playing is one way we learn, and as adults, many of us do not make the chance to express ourselves figuratively through a creative medium very often. Explore the ways people express themselves creatively, and encourage each other to use the materials express ideas about solitude and walking alone.

- This is not a competition.
- Expression is to be valued for itself.
- Avoid value judgement on the work.
- Accept each as an abstract sketch and expression.

Discussion

What is the essential nature of solitude?

- Do we like being alone.
- When is enough?
- When is too much?
- What do you do when you know you will be alone?
- Are you ever alone?

Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

Challenge

- Take 2 X 15 minute walks this week and practice walking meditation. Consider walking to or from work/ part of the way.
- Consciously take this time to be alone. Be aware of silence and space. Observe how you feel when alone. Is it a relief, is it disconcerting?

Collect an Artefact for next session

- Find something from your walks to bring to the group as a reminder or prompt about your experience.

The group shares stories from the challenge-

- Each participant has the opportunity to show his or her artefact.
- While someone is speaking, their artefact is the “talking stick”...this allows the speaker uninterrupted time to tell their story.
- Agree beforehand how much time each person has and allow time for comments and questions at the end.
- Ensure that each participant has a chance to share.

Readings and Discussion

As part of your preparation for today’s session, you will have read and considered one or more of the following stimulus materials.

Contribute to a group discussion on the ideas.

Identify the reading you chose and discuss the insights you gained.

Reading 1

Matthew 4: 1-11 Jesus in the wilderness

Often we read this passage and concentrate on the temptation of Jesus by the devil. Whether we view the devil as actual or a metaphor, Jesus surely did it tough in the desert. If we approach this passage as a way to understand the nature of solitude, we can learn a lot about what Jesus gained from his experience in the wilderness. It is worth noting that this story comes straight after the account of the Baptism of Jesus, where Jesus experienced “...the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”(Matthew 3: 16-17) What a pronouncement! What comes next is not a party for the newly anointed, not a “Congratulations Jesus, we knew it!” from his disciples. Rather, Jesus is then led by the Spirit into the wilderness. In other words: God made him go there...what for?

1. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
2. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.
3. The tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’
4. But he answered, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’

5. Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple.
6. Saying to him, 'If you are the son of God, throw yourself down: for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you." And "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."'
7. Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'
8. Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.
9. And he said to him, 'All these I will give you. If you will fall down and worship me.'
10. Jesus said to him "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.""
11. Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

1. In your opinion, what is the purpose of Jesus' time in the desert?

2. Describe insights you may have about your own time of solitude and how they relate to the story of Jesus in the wilderness.

3. What questions would you ask Jesus about his time in the desert and his experience of grappling with temptation?

"For my 30th Birthday, I gave myself some time away". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5bfxGNMY9c>

Reading 2



1. In your opinion, what is the purpose of Jesus' time in the desert?

2. Describe insights you may have about your own time of solitude and how they relate to the story of Jesus in the wilderness.

3. What questions would you ask Jesus about his time in the desert and his experience of grappling with temptation?

Reading 3

*Frances M Young, **Brokenness and Blessing: Towards a Biblical Spirituality**, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, London, 2007. Pp. 14-15.*

The desert monks

The prophets sometimes suggested that comfortable Israel needed to return to the desert, and such a return became literalised in the world of the early Church. Tradition makes St Antony the first to have crossed the line from settled land to wilderness. The tale is told that Antony wandered into a church just as the Gospel was being read, and heard the Lord saying to the rich man, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven' (Matthew 19:21). His literal response was to sell his inheritance and withdraw into the desert...soon the desert became 'a city' as more and more people rejected civilisation, and a new way of Christian discipleship was celebrated in collections of stories and sayings from the desert fathers.

Some years ago I was flying over Egypt and, looking down, I could see that sharp defining line which differentiates the cultivated Nile valley and the desert on either side of it. I realised more than ever before what stepping across that boundary meant.

For the early ascetics the desert was a place of trial and temptation...they found their inner demons exposed: fear and insecurity, anger and violence, self-deception and self-hatred...the monks felt they were engaged in battles with the devil, just as Christ had been...Yet the desert was not just a place of struggle. It was also the place where you met God, where you received wisdom. One saying went, 'Renounce this life so that you may be alive to God.' They looked for holiness and intimacy with God.

1. Identify three ideas that resonate with you and your own spiritual journey.

2. What insights do you have about how solitude may contribute to an enriched spiritual life?

3. If you could be alone for a period of time, where would you choose to go, and for how long?



Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that enriched Spiritual Development requires periods of solitude.

Solitude enriches
our spiritual life in
many ways

Solitude away from our familiar patterns stimulates and strengthens.

Sometimes, we have to go away without knowing when/if we are coming home; we leave behind our certainties and survive as a stranger in a strange land

Jesus spent time alone deliberately as a means of clarifying his mission and restoring peace and resolve.

Thriving often means being open to new roads, allowing ourselves the freedom to explore where they lead. We explore trust and curiosity.

Taking yourself deliberately away from what normally props you up as a tool for spiritual growth



Journey Week 5

Order of activities for the meeting

1. Gathering activity
2. Discuss your artefacts
3. Discuss what you learn from the Readings
4. Conclusion
5. Actions for Next Meeting

Gathering activity

The school plans to place a time capsule in the school grounds. You are to contribute a house brick as an example of building materials of our time. Your task is to summarise the idea of “homecoming” or “home” on your brick in 3 lines, with no more than 14 spaces on each. (see the Appendix for a template)

Write the summaries on your house brick and add to the time capsule.

You will need:

A house brick for each participant (an easy alternative is a shoe box)

- Permanent markers
- Grid lines template
- Optional...selection of stickers
- Honesty and creativity

Discussion

Home should be many things, but often falls short of our expectation.

As you distil your ideas of home, discuss the following:

- What is your ideal of HOME?
- How is your actual home like this?
- What different homes have you experienced over the years? Which type of home would you like to create?
- Who would you invite to share the space?
- What are the best things about your home?
- Do you have things that comfort you from your childhood home?
- What happens to people when their “home” is not safe?



Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting-

Challenge: Collect a sensory inventory of home.

Become aware of the things that remind you that you are home.

- Sights
- Sounds
- Aromas
- Textures
- Tastes
- Artefact

Collect them in a way that you can share with the group at the next meeting.

- A list
- A box
- Photos
- Recordings
- Image board



The group shares stories from the challenge —

- Each participant has the opportunity to show their artefact and tell their story.
- While someone is speaking, their artefact is the “talking stick”...this allows the speaker uninterrupted time to tell their story.
- Agree beforehand how much time each person has and allow time for comments and questions at the end.
- Ensure that each participant has a chance to share.

Readings and discussion

- As part of your preparation for today’s session, you will have read and considered one or more of the following stimulus materials.
- Contribute to a group discussion on the ideas.
- Identify the reading you chose and discuss the insights you gained.

Reading 1

Laird, Martin. *Into the Silent Land: The Practice of Contemplation*. Oxford University Press, New York, 12007.

Page 2:

God is our homeland. And the homing instinct of the human being is homed on God.

Pages 7-9:

A young prisoner cuts himself with a sharp knife to dull emotional pain. "As long as I can remember," he says, "I have had this hurt inside. I can't get away from it, and sometimes I cut or burn myself so that the pain will be in a different place and on the outside." Acknowledging this to himself, he decided to approach the Prison Phoenix Trust, whose aim is to address the spiritual needs of prisoners by teaching them how to pray, how to turn their prison cells into monastic cells. After learning how to meditate and practicing it twice a day for several weeks, the young prisoner speaks movingly of what he has learnt. "I just want you to know that after only four weeks of meditating half an hour in the morning and at night, the pain is not so bad, and for the first time in my life, I can see a tiny spark of something within myself that I can like."

Another prisoner discovers he is becoming more human and realizes in the process, "All beings, no matter how reactionary, fearful, dangerous or lost, can open themselves to the sacred within and become free. I have become free even in prison. Prison is the perfect monastery." ... Through their experience of interior stillness these prisoners unwittingly have joined a chorus of saints and sages who proclaim by their lives that this God we seek has already found us...Not only has this God we desire already found us, thus causing our desire, but God has never not found us.

St Augustine, On the Trinity,

God is our homeland. Dominant initiatives afoot at the present time, however, seem rather convinced that they know what God thinks, what lands God is giving to some, what lands God is taking from others. Lands of ideology, lands of aggression and violence, lands of tribal egocentricity threaten to overtake the land of hope and glory, directing the pomp and circumstance to themselves...(there is) an ancient Christian view that the foundation of every land is silence (W's 18:14), where God simply and perpetually gives of (God's self). This Self-gift is manifested in the creation, in the people of God and their inspired (if stumbling)pursuit of a just society, and most fully, in the Christian view of things, in Jesus Christ. This is the homeland to which every spiritual pilgrim is constantly being called, "called home," as St. Augustine says, "from the noise that is around us to the joys that are silent. Why do we rush about...looking for God who is here at home with us, if all we want is to be with him?" *

***St Augustine, On the Trinity, VIII, 7,11**

1. What is the strongest impression you receive from this passage?

2. Describe two insights you have gained from Laird's passage.

3. Identify one question you have about the idea that God calls us home, and that we are looking for God who is already our home .

Reading 2

Patrick Oliver, Drinking Deeply: Learning to Listen to the Song of Your Soul, P. Oliver, Brisbane 1999. Page 96

Images of homecoming can be captured: possibly the most positive image of (the 20th) century that burned itself into the human psyche was the first picture of an earth-rise taken from the moon by NASA's Apollo VIII of Christmas Day 1968. Perhaps more than any other photo, this image has spoken to so many of the hopes and dreams that lie buried within the heart of the human species, for it seems to evoke a nostalgia for something not touchable but tangible: a sense of homesickness for soul.

For the first time in its history, humankind was able to reflect on itself as a totality, and the blue-green jewel suspended in the blackness of space drew forth the fact that we as a planet hang by a thin thread. Yet not only is this truth evident in the outer world, with innumerable problems threatening its very existence, but it is also true for our inner worlds. The passion that such an image elicits can bridge us with the deepest yearnings of the human spirit, the unspeakable, unnamed yet entombed aspirations for unity.



1. Describe three images that stay with you from this passage.

2. What insights did you gain from this description of the earth in space, and humanity's part in it.

3. If you could ask one question of the astronauts who witnessed this phenomenon, what would it be?

Reading 3

Have you ever considered that you and your body can be home to God? The readings today attempt to express the idea that God and you are inseparable, always have been, and always will be. There is no need to “find” God because in fact, God has been around you and within you since the beginning.

A. 2 Corinthians 5:1

- a) For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

B. 1 Corinthians 3:16

- a) Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

C. John 14:23

- a) Those who love me (Jesus) will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

1. Identify three ideas that resonate with you and your own understanding/experience of God.

2. What hopes do you have for your relationship with God?

3. What puzzles you about the idea that God is our homeland?

Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that we are often tested when we are away from home and that home and God are synonymous.

When we are alive to the growth of our spirit, we see home and homecoming with new eyes

When we have tested ourselves away from home and return home, we see our familiar things, places and people with new eyes.

Homecoming in spiritual development may mean finally knowing what comfort and sustenance there is in resting with God, what joy there is in simply knowing where you belong.

Practically, homecoming may mean there are challenges enough right where you live. The focus is on belonging with a force that thinks you matter.
