

TREK

Spiritual Development Programme
For Staff in Anglican Schools

Part Three

Community

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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 3 of Trek

- The theme for Part 3 is community.
- 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.

Before the first meeting:

Challenge

- Book a dentist appointment.
- Enjoy an afternoon nap.
- Review the journey you have made through the Spiritual Development Process so far this year.

Journal

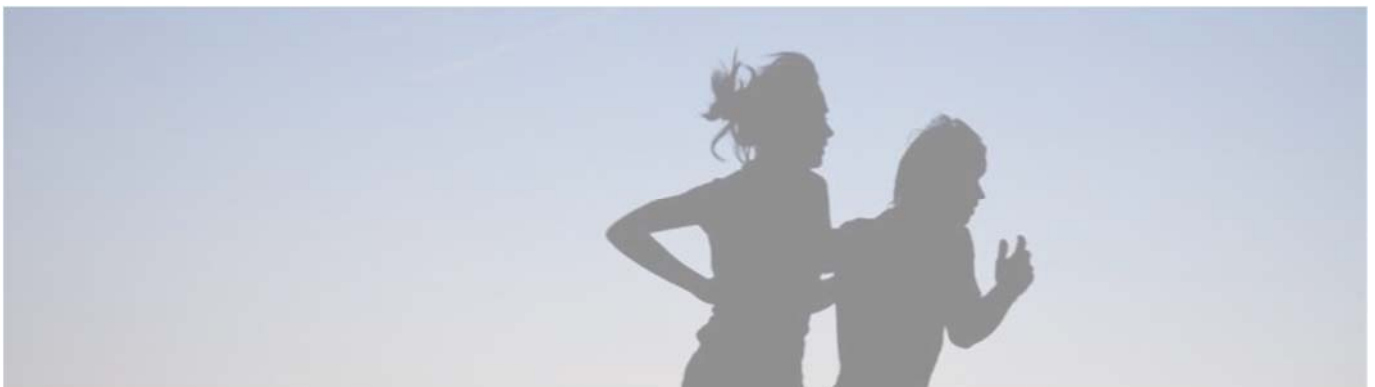
- You are at the end of a busy Semester. Take some time over the holidays to intentionally rest and recuperate.
- Consider what your body is telling you and take notice. Fix the niggles, take care of yourself and reflect on the following:
- Identify part of your physical realm which could use a new beginning.
- What practices and patterns around sleep, food, relationships would you like to tweak?
- How would you like to reflect the fact that your body is a temple to God?

Collect an Artefact for next session

- Consider the learning from this Semester and find an artefact from your holidays that symbolises your own development.

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.



Community Week 1

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:

- Magazine pages –20
- Rubber bands
- Sticky tape

Your task

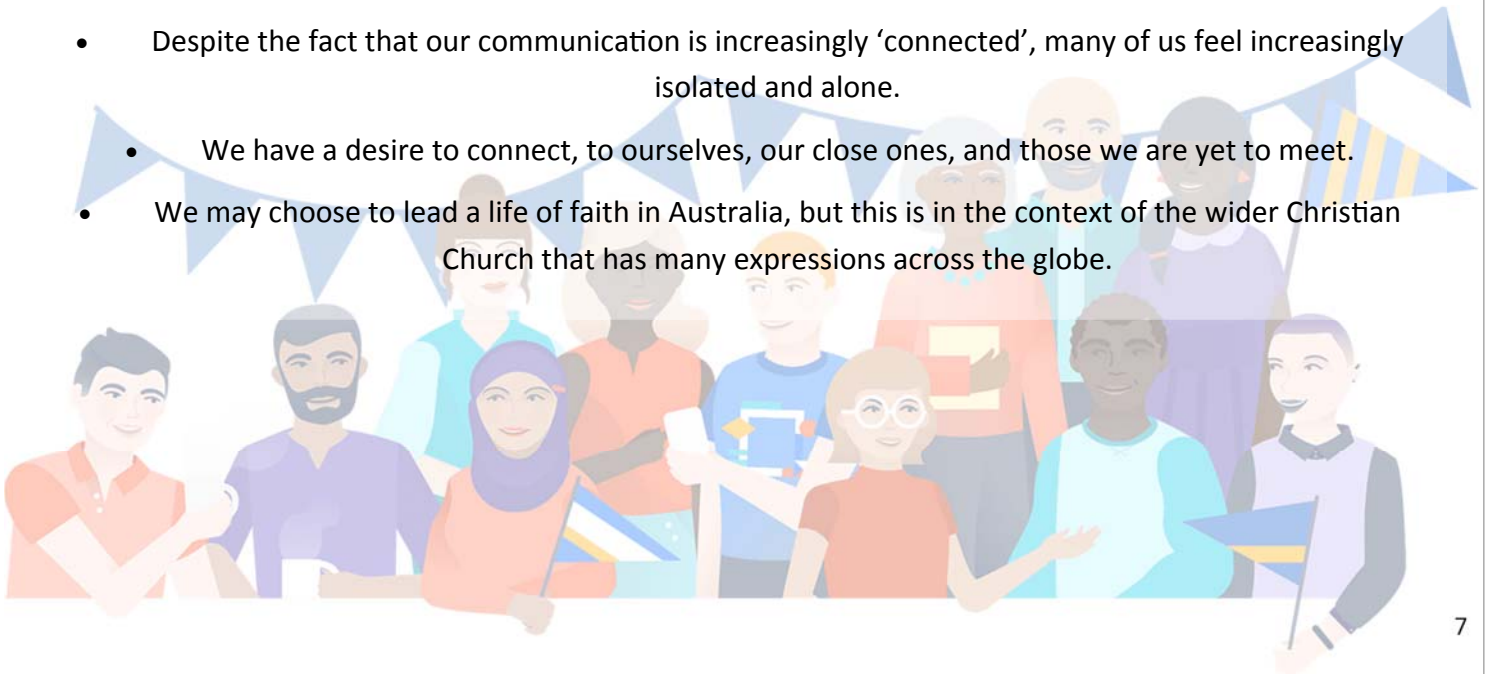
- roll up each of the pages
- secure each page cylinder with a rubber band
- tape the cylinders to build the highest possible structure that will stand alone for at least 10 seconds.

The catch:

- Each person uses only one hand.
- Work together to achieve the task.
- Time your attempts to see how your group improves as it learns to work together.

Discussion

- Humans evolved to live in communities, to take advantage of the skills and understanding of others, for the good of the group.
- Despite the fact that our communication is increasingly 'connected', many of us feel increasingly isolated and alone.
 - We have a desire to connect, to ourselves, our close ones, and those we are yet to meet.
 - We may choose to lead a life of faith in Australia, but this is in the context of the wider Christian Church that has many expressions across the globe.



Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed over the holidays -

Challenge

- Book a dentist appointment.
- Enjoy an afternoon nap.
- Review the journal you have made through the Spiritual Development Process so far this year.

Artefact

- Consider the learning from this Semester and find an artefact from your holidays that symbolises your own development.

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

John 15: 19-17

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

1. Describe the love that Jesus speaks of in this passage. What is he asking the disciples to do for one another?

2. How might you interpret this passage to apply in your life – your work and home life?

3. Why did Jesus command his friends to love each other? Why do you think this was necessary for Jesus to say?

Reading 2

Martin Laird, Into the Silent Land, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006, p 11-12

In the Letter to the Galatians he (Paul) writes, "I have been Crucified with Christ and yet I live: yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me" (Galatians 2:19). Paul looks within and sees not Paul but Christ. Are Paul and Christ two separate things? They are two separate things from the perspective of creation yes, but from the perspective of the transformation of awareness, no. When Paul looks within and sees Christ, I do not suggest he sees Christ as an object of awareness. Paul speaks of something more direct and immediate...about the presence of Christ in Paul. I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me." ... Obviously a CCTV camera watching Paul say all this is going to show the same old Paul...Whatever this "Christ-living-in-me" is...it holds true for each of us. My Christ-self is your Christ-self, our enemy's Christ-self (2 Corinthians 10:7). A helpful image to express this sort of thing is a wheel with spokes centred on a single hub. The hub of the wheel is God; we the spokes. Out on the rim of the wheel the spokes are furthest from one another, but at the centre, the hub, the spokes are most united to each other. They are a single meeting in the one hub. The image was used in the early church to say something important about that level of life at which we are one with each other and one with God. The more we journey towards the Centre the closer we are both to God and to each other. The problem of feeling isolated from both God and others is overcome in the experience of the Centre. This journey into God and the profound meeting of others in the inner ground of silence is a single movement. Exterior isolation is overcome in interior communion.

1. What is your experience of communion with others who share faith in God? Does it reflect the image of the wheel that Laird describes here?

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

2. In what ways do you deliberately seek community like this?

Reading 3

M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, InterVarsityPress, Illinois, 1993, p 42-43

If you want a good litmus test of your spiritual growth, simply examine the nature and quality of your relationships with others. Are you more loving, more compassionate, more patient, more understanding, more caring, more giving, more forgiving than you were a year ago: If you cannot answer these kinds of questions in the affirmative, and especially, if others cannot answer them in the affirmative about you, then you need to examine carefully the nature of your spiritual life and growth.

...Jesus inseparably joined loving God with loving others, and John reminds us that “the one who claims to be in the light and hates others is in the darkness still. The one who loves others abides in the light and is not a cause of stumbling. But the one who hates others is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know the way, because the darkness brings blindness of outlook” (1John 2:9-10). ...Our relationships with others are not only the testing grounds of our spiritual life but also the places where our growth toward wholeness in Christ happens. There is a temptation to think that our spiritual growth takes place in the privacy of our personal relationship with God and then, once it is sufficiently developed, we can export it into our relationships with others and “be Christian” with them. But holistic spirituality...takes place in the midst of our relationships with others, not apart from them.

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

2. Describe the way that community and spirituality have interplayed in your experience.

3. Extroverts gain energy from people. Introverts gain energy from being alone. Identify where you get your energy from and discuss how this may impact your spiritual development within community

Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that our capacity for Spiritual Development exists within our need for community and connectedness.

Spiritual development with God is inseparable from our experience in community

We yearn for community, our bodies and psyches have evolved to survive best by working in groups.

Our modern, western society obsesses over appearance and personality, neglecting character and honesty, and our hearts can tell when connection is superficial.

As we explore depth of relationship with God, our relationships with others will transform too.

Before the next meeting:

Challenge

- Find someone in your world who can teach you something. This week, practice being an apprentice. This may be as easy as learning a few words in another language, or as tricky as taking up silver smithing.
- The important thing to do is to become a student for a few minutes and acquire a skill. Adopt humility and openness to new ideas.

Journal

- Identify areas of your life where you learn from others. Perhaps you are in a running group, or a book club, or are learning ukulele.
- Who is the teacher in that situation?
- What do they know, and how did they learn it?
- What have you learnt from them?
- What characteristics of a student come naturally to you?
- What areas challenge you?

Collect an Artefact for next session

- Bring along evidence of your new skill, and introduce others to the 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.



Community 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

- At least one yo-yo
- 2metres of string per person
- Pack of playing cards

Remember the thrill of mastering “walking the dog” with a yo-yo, or nailing that magic trick, or weaving the best “Sydney Harbour Bridge” out of a cat’s cradle length of string.

Revisit those schoolyard days and see if you can remember how to perform one of these tricks.

If you could use some tips, check out these

For tips on walking the dog with your yoyo, see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c74H0oOlg1A>

for the Cat’s Cradle, check out Ky Alexander’s YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0X5EVaHRQM>

For a fabulous card trick, see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzjhcfVvWRA>



Discussion

- We have much to learn from others.
- Our efficient brains tend to categorise people by age, race or sex and we don’t tend to actively look for the nuance and complexity in each individual. What if we could see the teacher in our child, or the vulnerable heart in the tough kid? We explore the idea that we are all apprentices to each other in all aspects of our lives, but most especially in our spiritual development.
- We can approach each day as an apprentice, willing to learn from even the most unlikely person.

Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

Challenge

- Find someone in your world who can teach you something. This week, practice being an apprentice. This may be as easy as learning a few words in another language, or as tricky as taking up silver smithing.
- The important thing to do is to become a student for a few minutes and acquire a skill. Adopt humility and openness to new ideas.

Artefact:

- Bring along evidence of your new skill, and introduce others to the experience.

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

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, InterVarsity Press, Illinois, 2005. P83

Knowledge is a powerful thing. That’s why we like to be in the know, to have inside information and not to be left out of the loop. The irony is that we can become skilled in information acquisition and become no wiser for it. Information doesn’t necessarily transform or shape us. Learning something new doesn’t mean we are teachable. We can always use information to simply reinforce our own opinions and biases.

Jesus constantly looked for teachable people – people who would look beyond appearances and not make snap judgements, He warmed to those who asked honest questions. And he was grieved and dumbfounded by the educated who were hardhearted, unteachable and dense. He said to them, “you diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scripture that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39).

Jesus was passionate about those with ears to hear. He was attracted to those who willingly admitted how much they didn't know. People who could lay aside their prejudices and entertain something new were often the recipients of Jesus transforming word. Jesus is still looking for teachable disciples.

1. How would you categorise your willingness to learn new approaches, ideas and ways of being?

2. What are your thoughts on Ahlberg Calhoun's statement that we often use knowledge to reinforce our own opinions and biases?

3. Identify one question you would like to ask Jesus about life, the universe and everything.

You study the Scriptures thoroughly
because you think in them
you possess eternal life,
and it is these same scriptures
that testify about me,
but you are not willing to
**come to me so that
you may have life.**

—John 5:39-40

Reading 2

Michael Leunig and Karl Rahner, A Common Philosophy, Aurora Books, Richmond, Victoria, 1992, pp 26-27



1. Describe the central truth found here.

2. Where in the world have you seen other ways of existing as a community? Describe the difference.

3. What steps do you need to take towards authentic and present relationships? You may already strive for these, in which case, let us know how it's done!

Once upon a Child

When I was a child,
I slept in a room with a blue sky above
and played in paddocks beneath a cosy ceiling
with pictures printed on it. I talked to everyone,
expecting they would want to listen, and heard
the most wondrous things when big people
didn't know I was listening. When I dressed up
I could become a soldier or an engine driver
or a feathered Indian scout or a spaceman.
My play was serious and important, and
the people I loved never doubted my truths,
never threatened the life I was making. Mostly
they were old enough to have wrinkles
and spectacles, to keep walking sticks nearby,
to remember playing with hoops and skittles.
When they held my hand, it was because they
needed to. Their voices smiled, and they never
let others interrupt our games or our talk, but
they made sure we always got to meals on time.
When I am old,
I want to be them, I want to talk to grandchildren,
whenever they are, and join wholeheartedly
in their play. When I am old, I want to meet
the child that I was, and talk to me, and take me
seriously. When I am old, I want to love me,
as if there are many tomorrows.

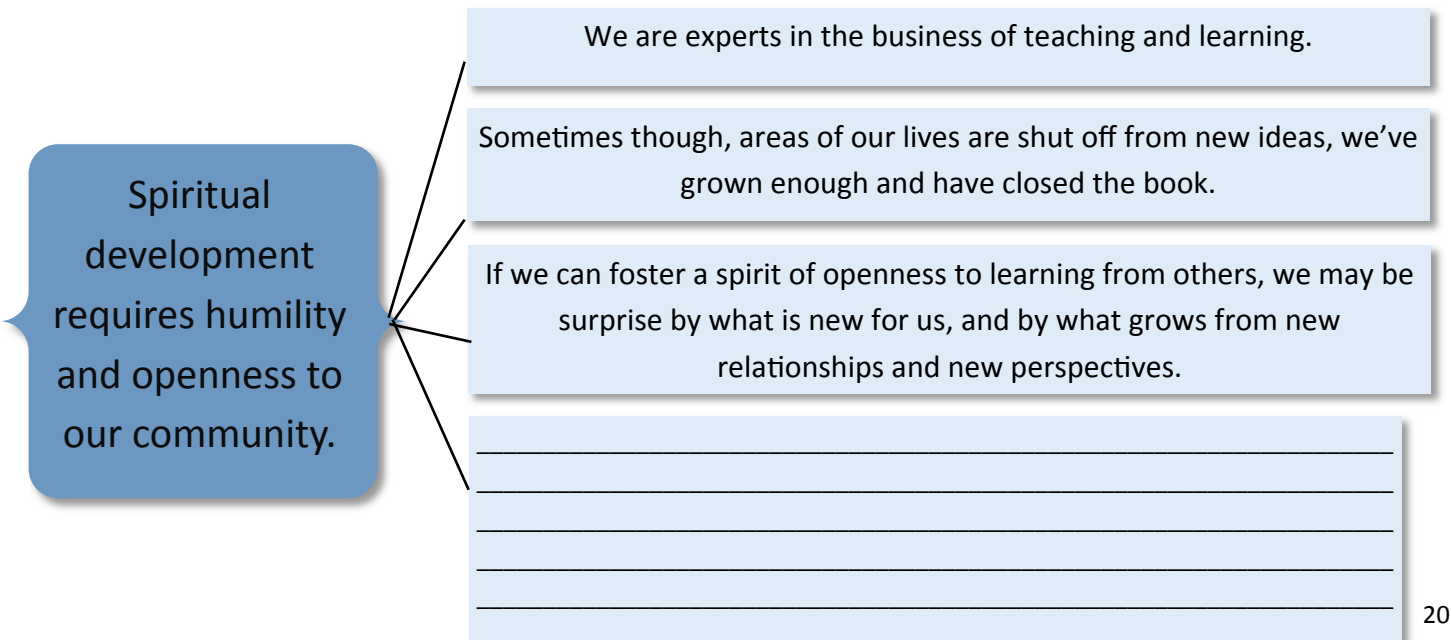
1. Remember a moment from your youth where you dreamed of how you would be as an adult.

2. What remains of your childhood in your adult life?

3. What would you like to be like in 10 years' time?

Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that Spiritual Development involves an awareness of those around you who have different perspectives to offer. We can make ourselves teachable and vulnerable to growth, to learning.



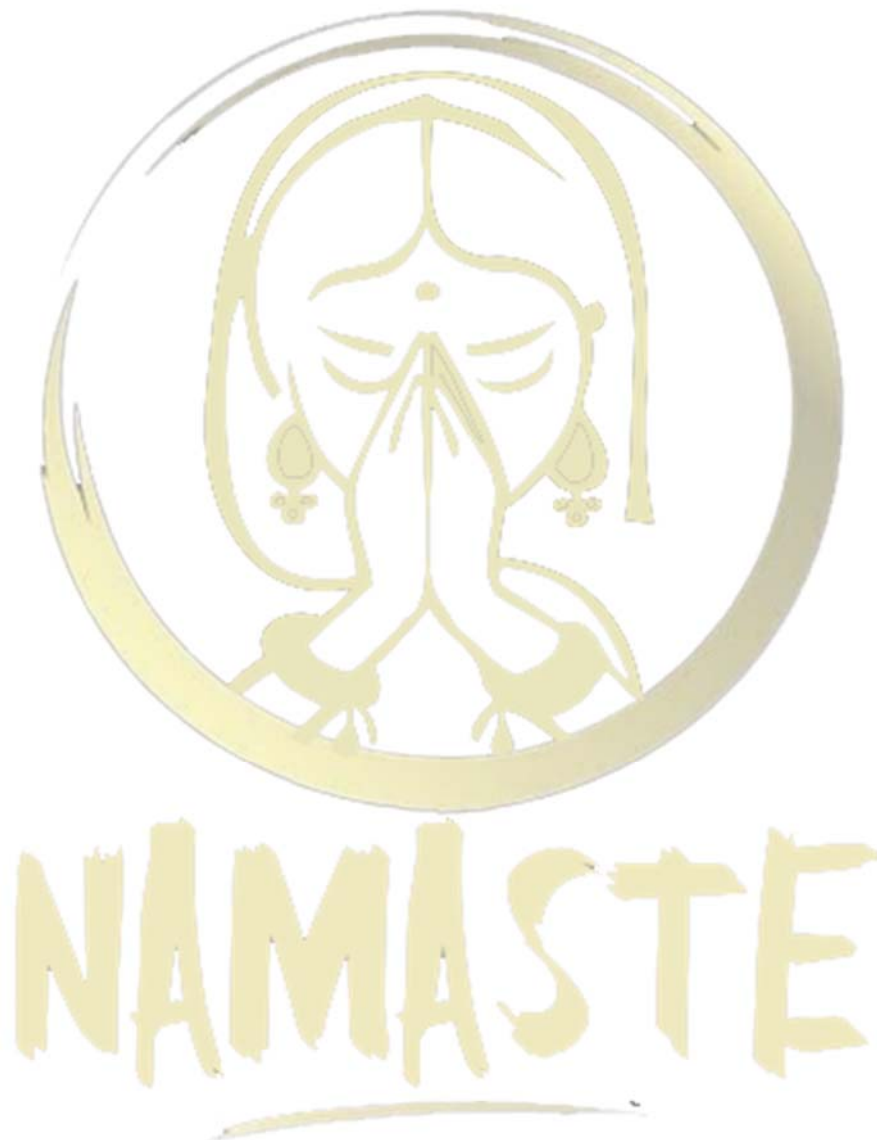
Before the next meeting:

Activity:

- “Namaste” is a greeting used in India and some South East Asian nations. It is spoken with a bow of the head, with hands pressed together, palms touching, fingers pointing up. It means “I acknowledge the divine in you” and its intention is to signal peace, hospitality and welcome to the receiver, in the understanding that at our core is a deep and divine connection.
- Walk around your area, notice people who would otherwise not be on your radar. Focus in on them and silently say “Namaste”. Consciously try to recognise the divine in them, and connect to the divine in yourself.
- Set aside 20 minutes for a walk where this is your intention.

Journal:

- Reflect on communities to which you have belonged during your lifetime.
- Identify one you remember fondly and reflect on how it influenced you at the time, and what you still learn from it today.
- Collect an Artefact for next session
- A photograph, image or poem which speaks to you of the divine in each person.



Community Week 3

Order of activities for the meeting

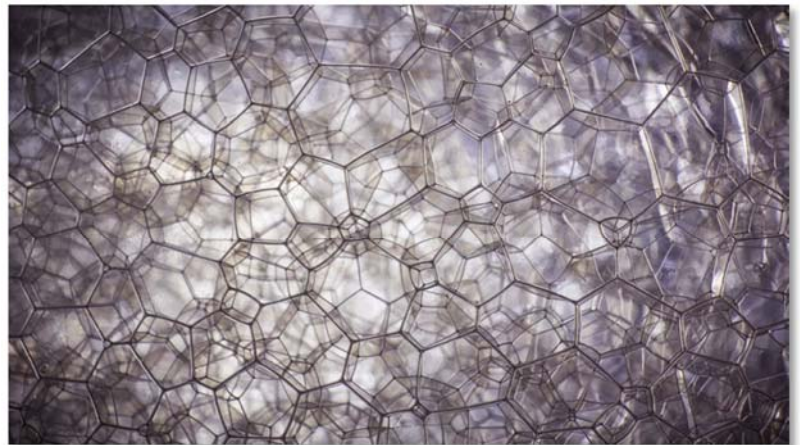
1. Gathering activity
2. Discuss your artefacts
3. Discuss what you learn from the Readings
4. Conclusion
5. Actions for Next Meeting

Gathering activity

You will need:

phones with macro camera function.

Take a look at the following close up images.



- These images are of ordinary things, close up.
- See what magic you can weave by strolling with your camera. Experiment with the macro setting and take some intriguing images of your own.
 - Compare photographs when you gather and see who can guess the subject of your image.

Discussion

- Change happens when we shift our gaze. Have you ever noticed that one part of your life chugs along without change until you really focus on it?
- Shifting our gaze can be the start of real change and transformation in our lives. When we shift focus, we shift energy, our attention and our problem solving brain.
- The theme “adjusting focus” is about looking around us and focussing on parts of our lives that affect our spiritual development and our relationship to community. Take time to zoom in on something, check it out, see if it could use sustained attention for a while, really think about it and be accountable for your thoughts in this area.
- Sometimes our established worldview needs our attention.
- Sometimes it is our idea of God – taken for granted for years, until we shine a light on it.
- Sometimes it is the way we look at those around us.

Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

- “Namaste” is a greeting used in India and some South East Asian nations. It is spoken with a bow of the head, with hands pressed together, palms touching, fingers pointing up. It means “I acknowledge the divine in you” and its intention is to signal peace, hospitality and welcome to the receiver, in the understanding that at our core is a deep and divine connection.
- Walk around your area, notice people who would otherwise not be on your radar. Focus in on them and silently say “Namaste”. Consciously try to recognise the divine in them, and connect to the divine in yourself.
- Set aside 20 minutes for a walk where this is your intention.

Collect an Artefact for next session

A photograph, image or poem which speaks to you of the divine in each person.

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

Patrick Oliver, *Getting Out of the Way*, P.Oliver, Brisbane, 2002, pp 116-117

THOUGHT FIVE: Let go of the treasured God images.

In this desert-space,

the cherished God-images

that have been a part of our prayer life

perhaps for many decades

now begin to crack and crumble.

It can be upsetting to recognise

that the favoured ways of picturing God

no longer fit reality.

For example

we as individuals, as a Church or as a society

may be forced to abandon the Santa God,

the Rescuer God, the Nice God,

the Rewarder God, or the God who Delivers From Suffering.

None of these was the experience of Jesus on the cross, and neither are they our experience in the desert.

Conversion has little to do with spiritual achievement,

which can well be just another guise

for spiritual selfishness.

Rather, conversion has to do with the lettings-go,

and in particular the lettings-go of the God-images.

We must remember

it is not the image of God that we are called to worship, but the God beyond the image.

The First Commandment speaks of the prohibition against any graven image.

This emphasises that we are not to hold onto our self-made graven image of God.

Otherwise we prevent ourselves from encountering the God beyond images.

Mystics of all the great religious traditions

have spoken of this consistently through the ages.

The ways and images

with which we have tried to express who God is

get slowly but surely changed into immovable rock and the rock itself then gets worshipped.

The story of a God

who lures and allures humans into divine love affairs

gets gradually metamorphosed

into dogmatic statements of orthodox belief.

These then become

requirements for membership of the select "saved".

The invitation to dance

gets exchanged for a set of orthodox beliefs

to be held at peril of eternal damnation.

So with what do we replace our image

when God does not live up to

how we wish God to be for us?

Well, we replace it with nothing;

we wait for God to reveal Godself anew.

This is probably the most difficult part of prayer

because it is based on our doing nothing

save active waiting.

In the process, we learn to see in the dark.

1. Identify three images of God that have been important to you over the years. Identify where these images began for you.

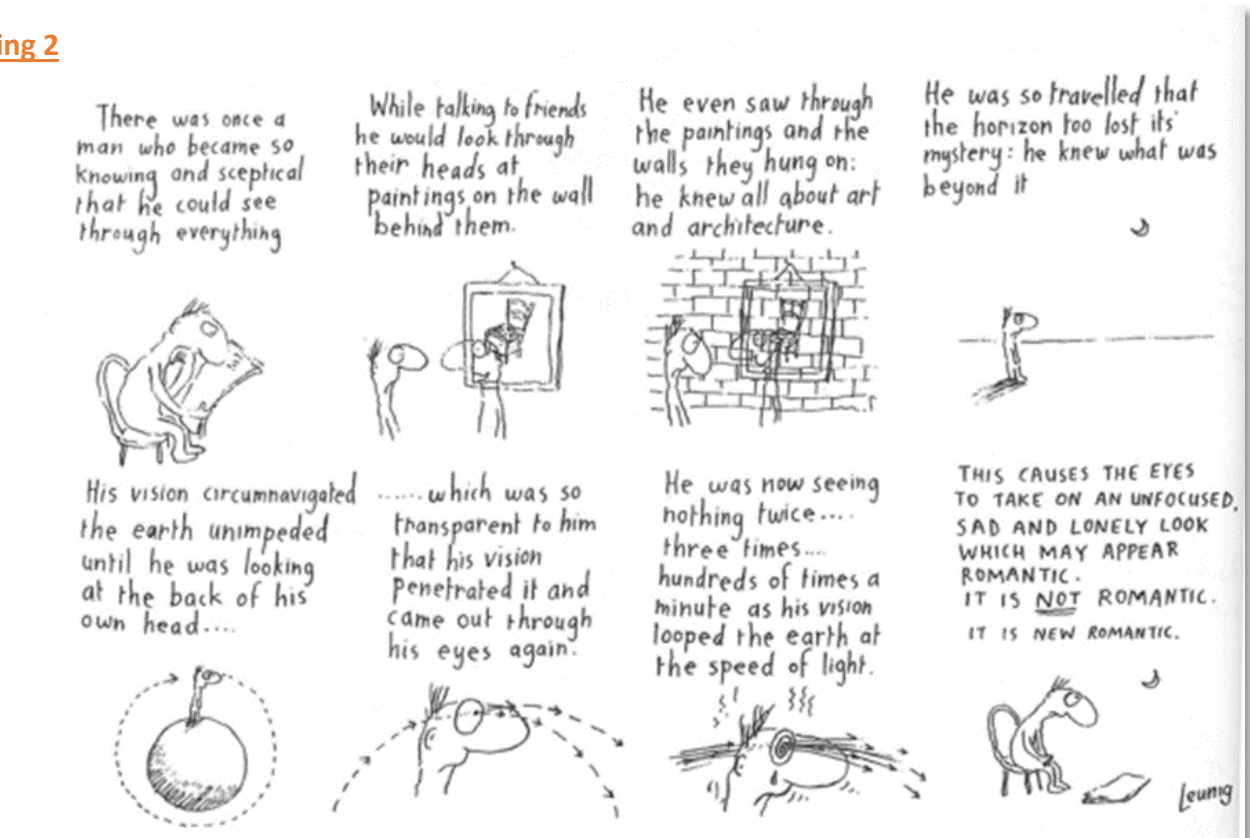
2. Oliver states that:

The ways and images with which we have tried to express who God is get slowly but surely changed into immovable rock and the rock itself then gets worshipped. What is your reaction to this statement?

3. What is the point of humans trying to describe God?

Michael Leunig and Karl Rahner, A Common Philosophy, Aurora Books, Richmond, Victoria, 1992, p29.

Reading 2



1. What is the phenomenon that Leunig describes here?

2. What are two points worth noting about the nature of insight as Leunig represents it here?

3. We all have areas of our lives that could benefit from a look with new eyes. About which areas of your life/faith/spirituality have you become cynical?



This thinking mind that "whirls about" is constantly concerned with thoughts, concepts, and images, and we obviously need this dimension of mind to meet the demands of the day, to think, to reflect on and enjoy life. But the thinking mind has a professional hazard. If it is not engaged in its primary task of reason, given half a chance it fizzes and boils with obsessive thoughts and feelings. There are, however, deeper demands, deeper encounters of life, love, and God, and there is far more to being alive than riding breathlessly around in the emotional roller coaster of obsessive thinking.

This requires, however, the awakening and cultivation of the "heart-mind," to stretch Theophan's term a bit. In fact, precisely because we think our lives, think our spirituality, think about God, we end up perceiving God as some "thing" over there, some cause among many other causes of things.

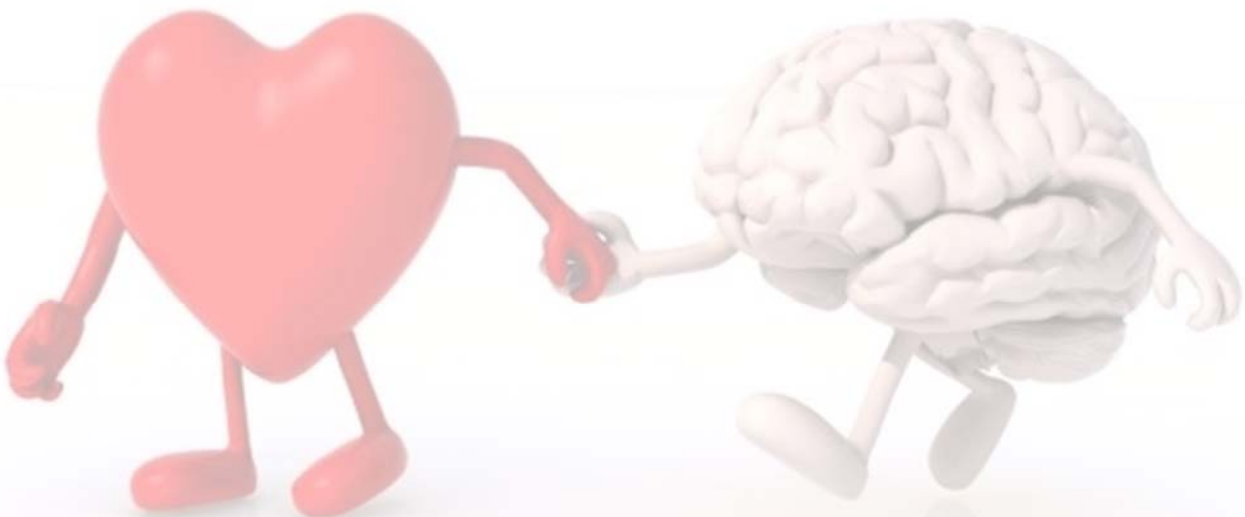
Thoughts about God make God appear, as Theophan says, "outside you." Theophan is but one of a host of saints and sages who attest that thinking about God is a problem if you want to commune with God. In fact, because our attention is so completely riveted to what's playing on the big screen of our thinking mind, we can live completely unaware of the deeper ground of the heart that already communes with God, that knows only communion, as branches know deeply the vine (Jn 15:5).

Therefore, when Theophan speaks of descending from "your head into your heart," he does not mean what modern pop psychology means when it says we must get out of our heads and feel our feelings. He means shift your attention from the screen of thinking mind on which both thoughts and feelings incessantly appear, as they are meant to, to the ground of the heart, this immense valley of awareness itself in which thoughts and feelings appear. Theophan says, "Images, however sacred they may be, retain the attention outside, whereas at the time of prayer the attention must be within-in the heart. The concentration of attention in the heart - this is the starting point of prayer."* This shifting of the attention from

1. To what extent do you relate to the distinction drawn here between the “thinking mind” and the “heart-mind”?

2. “In fact, because our attention is so completely riveted to what's playing on the big screen of our thinking mind, we can live completely unaware of the deeper ground of the heart that already communes with God, that knows only communion, as branches know deeply the vine (Jn 15:5).” Describe your experience of the “deeper ground of the heart that already communes with God”?

3. What questions do you have about the ideas Martin Laird presents in this passage?



Community 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

Game show:

- Each person writes down three facts about themselves – two of them are true and one is not.
- The others in the group hear the three facts and question the person about details.
 - Decide which of the “facts” is not real.

Discussion

- Discuss how we tell the difference between authenticity and manipulation or pretence.
- How can you tell if someone is sharing their real self with you, or keeping a mask of pretence in place?
 - How can you tell when you’ve slipped into insincerity or performance-mode?



Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

Create a self-portrait.

Before you begin, think over your learning from the journey with your Spiritual Development group.

Consider how you might represent some of your journey in the portrait.

You may choose any medium that appeals to you, some to consider are:

- Pastels on paper
- Black pen and paper
- Collage
- Photographs
- Word art programs

Artefact:

- Bring along your self-portrait.

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

Julian of Norwich, Enfolded in Love: Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich, (translation by Members of the Julian Shrine), Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1980, p. 5

Trust, the Highest Prayer

Then the way we often pray came into my mind and how, through the lack of knowing and understanding of the ways of love, we pester him (sic) with petitions.

Then I saw truly that it gives more praise to God and more delight if we pray steadfast in love, trusting his goodness, clinging to him by grace, than if we ask for everything our thoughts can name.

All our petitions fall short of God and are too small to be worthy of him, and his goodness encompasses all that we can think to ask.

The best prayer is to rest in the goodness of God knowing that that goodness can reach right down to our lowest depths of need.

1. The prayer described here by the great Christian mystic advocates resting with God. Describe a time when you rested with God, whether it was from conscious effort, or through desperation and lack of other options.

2. Describe two insights you gained from Mother Julian's description of prayer.

3. Identify one question you have for this woman who wrote in the late 1300's.

THOUGHT SIX: Let go of "spiritual progress".

Just as the images of God have to go
when they get in the way of God revealing Godself anew,
we also are required to relinquish
what perhaps has been a motivator on the Journey.

"Spiritual Progress" is a misnomer,
for it can refer to the notion of climbing up,
of "getting somewhere" in spiritual achievement.
Courses in "spirituality" are advertised sometimes
for "beginners", "the advanced, or "more advanced".

Yet spirituality ...
has nothing to do with spiritual achievement.
Rather, it requires a climbing down movement.
...every hold has to be stripped away -
including the spiritual bank accounts and merit points
which we can tend to recall and recount
at times when life and God aren't treating us fairly:

"I did all that for them!"

"Surely that counted for something with God!"

"So you are saying I've been a good person for nothing?"

All the great saints recognised that in the end
God is to be found (and God finds us)
not in spiritual selfishness but in spiritual poverty.

Francis of Assisi called it "Lady Poverty".

He "married" Lady Poverty

because he recognised that

in the relinquishing of spiritual achievement

we can have a chance to know what it is all about
and what it is all for.

1. Describe others who have had a similar insight, and who have made an impact on you.

2. Describe two ways you can practice stripping down your spirituality to be found by God.

3. What questions do you have in response to Oliver's recommendation?

Reading 3 - Paula Gooder, *Everyday God: the Spirit of the Ordinary*, Canterbury Press, London 2012, p 77-78

Jesus describes himself as light (John 8:12); a gate (John 10:7); a shepherd (John 10:11 and 14); a vine (John 15:1); and, of course, as bread. Elsewhere Jesus also describes what he gives to the world as a gushing spring of water (John 4:14). These are no grand, conceptual ideas communicating something ethereal about the essence of God made flesh, they are simple, clear and down to earth.

These days certain supermarkets stock a 'basics' or 'essentials' range which contains those everyday ingredients that everyone needs, for less money than usual. I am always entertained to see what supermarkets consider to be basic or vital for everyday living; apparently chocolate mousse, mozzarella pearls and croissant are all basic requirements for living. Jesus' essentials seem to me to be far more essential than that. Light, nourishment, refreshment and protection are among the things that Jesus, the great "I am", provides for us. Jesus doesn't offer us the extras that make life more fun but which we don't really need. The Jesus of John's Gospel offers us the most ordinary things possible for our well-being and survival; the ability to see where we are going; inner nourishment; never ending refreshment; and a shepherd who not only cares for his sheep but protects them from those who would break in and cause them harm.



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

2. What do you identify as the basics for spiritual maturity/development?

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 stripping the trappings away to reveal the basic needs of our hu-

Spiritual Development requires that we acknowledge the props we rely on, and the roles we play

We grow to have the courage to be true to ourselves, to be real with others and be truly present in our communities.

Some may find an area of concern that becomes a passion and focus for more time and energy

Becoming real people through Christian Spiritual Development can make us useful, authentic people.

Before the next meeting:

Challenge

Make a difference this week.

Choose to make someone's day (anonymously or otherwise).

Suggestions:

- Drop an early secret Santa present
- Leave flowers in the staffroom.
- Card of appreciation in a pigeon hole
- Consider the real needs of those close to you. Deliver on one of them.
- Send a card the old-fashioned way (envelopes and stamps are involved!)



Journal

- As you focus on others this week, become conscious of your impact on those around you.
- Often we have a choice about how to respond to situations. Consider how often you consciously choose to contribute light rather than darkness.
- Identify and describe the people currently in your life who make your world worthwhile.

Collect an Artefact for next session

- Prepare a report of your "pay it forward" moment. Change names to protect the innocent.

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.



Community 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 initial activity today involves baking. This may thrill you, or you may choose to ignore it altogether and go for the second option on the next page.

Option 1

For the bread

Follow steps 1-3 as a group. Finish the recipe together if you would like to, or divide the dough to bake separately at home.

You will need

- Olive oil, to grease
- 450g (3 cups) plain bread flour (see note)
- 1 tablespoon (14g/2 sachets) dried yeast
- 2 teaspoons caster sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 250ml (1 cup) warm milk
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 tablespoon linseeds
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin kernels (pepitas)
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- Milk, to brush

Step 1

Combine flour, yeast and sugar in a large bowl. Stir in salt. Make a well in the centre. Add milk and butter.

Step 2

Use a wooden spoon to stir the mixture until well combined, then use your hands to bring the dough together in the bowl. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 10 minutes or until the dough is smooth and elastic.

Step 3

Brush a large bowl with olive oil to grease. Place the dough in the bowl and cover with a damp tea towel. Set aside in a warm, draught-free place to prove for 45 minutes-1 hour or until the dough has almost doubled in size.

Step 4

Punch down the centre of the dough with your fist. Turn onto a lightly floured surface. Knead for 2 minutes or until the dough is elastic and has returned to its original size

Step 5

Preheat oven to 200C. Brush an 8cm-deep, 11 x 21cm (base measurement) loaf pan with olive oil to lightly grease.



Step 6

Use a lightly floured rolling pin to roll out the dough to a 30cm square. Sprinkle with linseeds, poppy seeds, pumpkin kernels and 1 tablespoon of sesame seeds. Fold the dough in half to enclose the seeds and knead until well combined. Shape into a 20cm-long loaf. Place in the prepared pan. Cover with a damp tea towel. Set aside in a warm, draught-free place to prove for 30 minutes or until the dough has almost doubled in size.

Step 7

Brush the top of the loaf with milk and sprinkle with remaining sesame seeds. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped on the base. Turn onto a wire rack to cool slightly. Serve at room temperature.

<http://www.taste.com.au/recipes/20077/country+seeded+loaf?ref=collections,bread-recipes>



Option 2

You will need:

- Bottle of sparkling wine
- Glasses

Pour a glass each and discuss how it is that the bubbles contribute so much to the drink. They are an inseparable part of the product, and without them, it would be well... just wine.

Discussion

- To live is to make an impact.
- Metaphors of light and yeast illustrate how we can live the difference, and become agents of life and light in our communities while being very much a part of them. How do we live to become the metaphorical bubbles in the champagne, the yeast in the bread?
- Quiet revolutions happen by choices, when habits of awareness interact with a spirit of connectedness and compassion.
- We are most useful when we are available to be Jesus to others in our communities; when we are open to life interrupting our plans.

Discuss the artefacts

Remember the challenge you completed prior to meeting -

Make a difference this week.

Choose to make someone's day (anonymously or otherwise).

Suggestions:

- Drop an early secret Santa present
- Leave flowers in the staffroom.
- Card of appreciation in a pigeon hole
- Consider the real needs of those close to you. Deliver on one of them.
- Send a card the old-fashioned way (envelopes and stamps are involved!)

Artefact:

- Prepare a report of your "pay it forward" moment. Change names to protect the innocent.
- You may prefer to tell others about someone who has made a difference in your life, spiritually, practically, emotionally or otherwise.

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

Matthew 13:33; cf. Luke 13:20-21

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

1. Describe the action of the kingdom of heaven in this parable told by Jesus.

2. How would you describe the impact of the kingdom of heaven in our world today? Describe any evidence you see of it's impact.

3. Given that we are all children of this kingdom, what do you perceive is your role as “yeast” in the “bread” of your community?



Reading 2 - James 2:14-18

What good is it ... if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

1. Create another way of saying the same thing.

2. The words of Jesus take up a relatively and remarkably small percentage of the New Testament. Here are a few of them. If this passage was all you ever knew of Jesus, what would you think?

3. What question do you have about this very practical element of spirituality?

Reading 3 - About The Waiters Union

We decided to call ourselves the West End Waiters Union because we wanted to be waiters in West End. We didn't want to set agendas for people. We just wanted to be available, like waiters, to take people's orders, and to do what we could do, to help them. We particularly wanted to help to develop a sense of hospitality in the locality, so that all people, especially people who are usually displaced in areas like ours, could really begin to feel at home in the community.

We dream of a world in which all the resources of the earth will be shared equally between all the people of the earth so that even the most disadvantaged among us will be able to meet basic needs with dignity and joy. We dream of a great society of small communities cooperating interdependently to practice personal, social, economic and political compassion, love, justice and peace. We dream of people developing networks of friendships in which the pain we carry deep down can be shared openly in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect. We dream of people understanding the difficulties we have in common, discussing our problems, discussing the solutions, and working together for personal growth and social change in the light of the love of Christ. And we yearn to make this dream a reality in our own locality.

There have never been many people in the Waiters Union. We started with two households 20 years ago; there aren't more than 20 households associated with us now. The Waiters Union is not a high profile group. As waiters, we try to keep a low profile in the area. None of the activities that we are involved in carry our name. They all carry the names of the groups that organise those activities, which we contribute to, but we do not control. As a result, a lot of people in our area may know us well as people, but may not even know that the group we are part of exists. Which is fine, because the group exists to promote the community, not the group; and the group can function more effectively as a catalyst in the community if it is prepared to be more or less invisible, rather than attract attention to itself at the expense of other groups. However, we are not secretive. We welcome enquiries and answer questions as freely and as fully as we can. And we are inclusive. We invite anyone who is interested in our work - to work with us, alongside us, as partners in the work together.

All the work we do is self-directed and other-orientated. Each person has the right to shape every group that they are a part of. Being part of a group depends on participation. A person becomes a part of a group, not by jumping through any hoops, but simply by participating in the group. Once a person is a part of the group, they have the right to manage the group they are a part of. We believe people should have the right to shape all the decisions that impact on their lives. And we believe the best way for us to shape the decisions that impact on our lives, individually and collectively, is through the process of consensus. All the groups nominate rotating facilitators for their meetings so as to be careful to do, what the good book says, 'is right in the eyes of everybody.' As the groups work from the bottom up, to empower people, particularly people who are marginalised and disadvantaged, we particularly include people who are usually marginalised and disadvantaged in the decision making processes of the groups. So all the groups actually work with the people that they work for and, in so doing, seek to enable the people they work with, as partners, to realize their enormous potential as men and women made in the image of God.

One group has sought to promote the aspirations of the original inhabitants of our neighbourhood by lobbying for permission for them to build the as-yet-unbuilt cultural centre in Musgrave Park, which is in the middle of the neighbourhood. Another group has sought to support refugees by sponsoring their settlement and the settlement of their families, working through the anguish they go through as 'strangers in a strange land'. Last, but not least - though they are often considered last, and treated as least by the powers that be - through a whole range of groups, we have sought to relate to the people in our community, who have physical, intellectual, and emotional disabilities - not as clients, nor as consumers, still less as users - but as our friends!

None of these things that any of us are doing seem that great. However, we constantly encourage one another to remember that true greatness is not in doing big things, but in doing little things with a lot of love over the long haul. And that is exactly what we are trying to do!

<http://www.waitersunion.org/waitersunion.htm>

1. What are your thoughts about a community such as the Waiters Union? Have you heard of similar groups before?

2. Describe the type of spiritual practice you'd need to work and live with a group like this one.

3. Identify a place in which you could envisage living like this.

Conclusion

You may have touched on these points through your discussion. Conclude your time together by revising the idea that Spiritual Development involves practical involvement in the needs of others.

Spiritual development involves a willingness to become part of the whole, an indivisible element within the community

Note how the yeast acts to work from within the dough. It is an integral, inseparable part of the dough.

Without it the bread would not rise

There would be no life in the loaf

If we choose to follow Jesus, we will become part of a whole, an element of light and life in our communities.

Before the next meeting:

Challenge

Create for yourself a quiet place to practice silence and solitude.

This may look like:

- A prayer desk in the corner of your home study.
- A comfy couch in a sunny corner of your bedroom.
- A chair in a crowded coffee shop (with your headphones in!)
- A place in your garden or a local park where you can stand still for a moment.

Aim to visit this place during your holidays regularly. Note that “regularly” may mean once a week.

Journal

- What experience have you had with prayer?
- Who do you know who sets aside time for silence and solitude?
- What does it do for them?
- When have you felt the benefits of solitude and silence?

Collect an Artefact for next session

- You may choose to take a photo of your quiet place to share with the group, or prepare a description of your aims and purpose for this space.

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.



