

Activity: Recalling God’s Movement in the Threads of your Life

This activity is excerpted from Session VI: “Discernment and Discipleship: Your Piece of God’s work in the World of K.H. Staudt’s discernment curriculum resource “Shaping a Faithful Life”. The full curriculum is available in pdf on this website or by following the link <http://poetproph-discerningyourway.blogspot.com/>

In this activity, participants call to mind times in their lives when they were particularly aware of God’s presence in their lives and, using these memories, create a tangible beaded string that represents each of these moments. Participants explore together the patterns of faithfulness and service that emerge from each person’s unique set of beads.

Materials

- Long pieces of string or yarn with a knot tied at one end
- Beads of varying colors and sizes that can be easily threaded onto the string or
- yarn.
- Writing materials (pen and paper)

Exploring: “The Thread”

In this meditative activity participants will be invited to reflect on the “God moments” in their lives; moments when they felt connected to something greater than themselves, or particularly in touch with life’s mystery and depth.

The Leader reads aloud this poem by William Stafford

The Way it Is

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn’t change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can’t get lost.
Tragedies happen, people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time’s unfolding.
You don’t ever let go of the thread.

The Leader gives each person a 16” long piece of string or yarn, knotted at one end and suggests that this will represent the thread that is mentioned in the poem. The leader also sets out a variety of beads in a place where all can have access to them.

The Leader guides participants through a process of intentionally recalling different periods of their lives. After each prompt, participants are invited to select a bead that reminds them of that moment, thread it onto the string and tie it in place.

The Leader may use the following “script” with the hand-on work of stringing beads onto the “thread”.

The Leader says In Luke, the risen Jesus tells his disciples, in a scene of tremendous joy, that “repentance and forgiveness of sins” are to be preached to “all nations.” The good news is that God loves and wants to restore humankind and to include all nations in the promise He made to Abraham. The disciples are to be “witnesses”, bearing testimony to what THEY have experienced. Their charge is to carry on Jesus’ ministry. There is work to be done, that He is going to do it THROUGH THEM.

In Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” In Luke/Acts he promises to send the Holy Spirit on them. Though the stories are about his parting from them, they are also, paradoxically, about the ongoing presence of the Risen Jesus with the church, continuing to call us to discipleship

The Leader reads this passage from Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours;
Yours are the only hands with which he can do his work,
Yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world,
Yours are the only eyes through which his compassion
can shine forth upon a troubled world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

The Leader says It is likely that each of us has experienced this ongoing presence of Jesus in our lives, though we may not name it in this way. This activity is an opportunity to recall some of the “God moments” you have had, and may help you awaken within yourself a sense of where you are being called to “bear witness”.

The Leader says:

“Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” and invites the participants to breathe in and out deeply for a few quiet breaths.

The Leader says: In this activity you will be taking a few moments to think back to times in your life when you experienced some passing sense of the holy, perhaps in nature or in an exchange with another person. This experience may have felt like an awareness that something “other” was breaking into your life either quietly or dramatically. You may have felt great joy, great sorrow or great confusion. As I read these questions, rest with each and pay attention to what comes to mind. Then, jot down a brief note that describes what you recall, and choose a bead to add to your thread. You can make a knot by the bead to hold it into place.

What is your earliest recollection of God/Jesus/ Spirit alive in the world? *As you recall this experience, write down a few words about it and choose a bead to add to your thread*

Can you remember a “God moment” in Elementary school? *As you recall this experience, write down a few words about it and choose a bead to add to your thread*

How about in your junior high or middle school years? Where or when were you very aware either of the presence or absence of the holy in your life? *As you recall this experience, write down a few words about it and choose a bead to add to your thread*

What about in High School? If more than one time comes to mind, pick a bead for each one. *As you recall these experiences, write down a few words about them and choose some beads to add to your thread*

Now recall in your imagination your years after high school or your time in college. When or where during this time did you have an experience of the “other” breaking into your life?
As you recall these experiences, write down a few words about them and choose some beads to add to your thread

How about a time after college? A time when the Holy Spirit seemed especially present?
As you recall these experiences, write down a few words about them and choose some beads to add to your thread

What about recently: When have you been aware of a sense of presence, mystery, or meaning in your life?
As you recall these experiences, write down a few words about them and choose some beads to add to your thread

The Leader says: Now we’ll gather in groups of two to share what we’ve experienced in this act of recalling. One person will share his or her recollections and experiences first without interruption. Then the listener will respond by saying what he or she heard in the recounting.

- What kinds of things seemed to be most meaningful to the person who was sharing?
- Did a common theme or THREAD seem to emerge, some aspect of each experience that tied them all together?
- What might these themes or THREADS suggest about the sharer's spiritual journey and future path?

Next, the listener shares his or her memories and recollections and the conversation partner comments on themes or threads and any inferences that may be drawn from these.

The Leader reconvenes the whole group and asks:

- What kinds of patterns are we observing in our lives?
- What are the “threads” we hold onto?
- What might this suggest to us about how we encounter the “call” of God in our lives, how we perceive the movement of God's Holy Spirit?

The leader concludes by saying: Each of us has had unique and personal experiences of the Holy at different times in our lives. These unique experiences may share commonalities that become woven into our identities and inspire who we are and who we become. They form the THREAD that connects us to that which is Holy within us. As you contemplate the beauty of your string of beads, each representing an encounter with the Holy, and all contributing to a totality of experiences, consider how they have taken on a significance and contain a message about where God may be calling you.

This closing prayer from Thomas Merton may be offered (the “I” has been changed to “we” for this purpose):

O LORD GOD, we have no idea where we are going.

We do not see the road ahead of us.

We cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think that we are following your will does not mean that we are actually doing so.

But we believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And we hope we have that desire in all that we are doing.

We hope that we will never do anything apart from that desire.

And we know that if we do this you will lead us by the right road though we may know nothing about it.

Therefore we will trust you always though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

We will not fear, for you are ever with us, and you will never leave us to face our perils alone.

Amen.