A vibrant, abstract stained glass pattern in shades of red, blue, yellow, and green, featuring geometric shapes and stylized figures. The pattern is composed of several large, overlapping triangles that form a larger, irregular shape. The background is white.

ADULT FORMATION

FALL 2020

How can we continue to deepen our spiritual lives and connectedness in the midst of a pandemic?

It's been several months since we were last together. Yet, our desire to remain connected stays strong. The need to engage in spiritual practices is maybe more important than ever before in our lives. There is so much going on in the world that we cannot control and perhaps change is not happening on the timeline we had hoped for. Many of us are isolated and it can be easy to slip into the grips of worry. As Christians, our toolbox is full of practices to combat the struggles that arise from complex circumstances such as the pandemic we know find ourselves in the midst of. Our common tradition is filled with practices that are grounding and which help us to feel connected to each other and to the wider church.

In this booklet we explore a handful of spiritual practices which we commend to you for a time such as this. We believe that taking up any of these practices will be a buoy for your spirit. Each offers a meaningful way to deepen your relationship with divine. Some of the practices may be familiar to you; others may be new.

You are invited to experiment with the practices described in this booklet. Pick them up when you feel called to and approach them playfully. Throughout this Fall, as we continue to physically distance ourselves it is our hope that this booklet will be a resource for you in your spiritual life. We pray that it may help you to feel connected in a deep and meaningful way with our parish, each other, and God.

Sources:

- http://efm.sewanee.edu/assets/uploads/CLSM_Chapter_2.pdf
- <https://www.unspokenelements.com/pages/how-to-use-anglican-prayer-beads>
- <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>
- <https://www.stjohns-hingham.org/praying-the-daily-office>
- <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/253799/1-What-is-Lectio-Divina.pdf>
- <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>
- <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/word-of-god/upload/lectio-divina.pdf>
- https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/method_cp_eng-2016-06_0.pdf

LECTIO DIVINA

Let us ruminate, and, as it were, chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort and consolation of them.
— Thomas Cramner

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the Christian church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6th century. It is a way of praying the scriptures that leads us deeper into God's word. We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully in order to savour it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally and aids that union we have with God through Christ who is the Living Word.

Lectio is not Bible study or even an alternative to Bible study but something radically different. It operates on the emotional rather than the cerebral level. It is perhaps "heartly" rather than "heady." Through it we allow ourselves to be formed in the likeness of Christ; it is about formation rather than instruction.

Lectio is a spiritual practice that can be undertaken individually or as part of a group. When undertaken in a group setting, lectio is about listening to the experience of others and allowing it to inform your own experience. It is never about pushing a particular view and certainly is not competitive. Group lectio involves an invitation to share, but sharing is not compulsory. It is not a discussion, and no one comments on what another person shares. In group lectio, we listen to what is shared in the belief that God communicates with us through what others might say. Meeting together to engage in group lectio enables participants to learn a practice which can enhance their own personal prayer time and relationship with God.

Prepare

As you enter into lectio, find a comfortable seat and consider lighting a candle as a gentle reminder that you are in a prayerful space. For several minutes, allow yourself to begin to breathe slowly and deeply. As you settle into silence, quietly ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

Lectio

As you read the passage for the first time listen for a word or phrase that attracts you. Allow it to arise from the passage as if it is God's word for you today. You may want to sit in silence for several minutes listening for that word or phrase. When you have heard it, sit in silence for a while longer, repeating the word or phrase in your head. Then, say the word or phrase aloud.

Meditatio

As you read the passage a second time, spend several minutes pondering how this word or phrase speaks to your life and why it has connected with you. Ask where God may be nudging you. Sit in silence for a time and then frame a single sentence that begins to say aloud what this word or phrase says to you.

Oratio

As you read the passage a third time, ask what Christ is calling from you. What is it that you need to do or consider or relinquish or take on as a result of what God is saying to you in this word or phrase? Sit in silence for several minutes and then speak your response aloud as a prayer, asking God to lead you into that response.

Contemplatio

After you read the passage for the last time, spend some time with God in silent, wordless contemplation. Open your heart and mind to God's presence, returning to God whatever you have discovered through lectio. Rather than putting this into words, allow the presence of God as Christ the Incarnate Word to refresh you.

CENTERING PRAYER

Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.

Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. Rather, it adds depth of meaning to all prayer and facilitates the movement from more active modes of prayer — verbal, mental or affective prayer — into a receptive prayer of resting in God. Centering Prayer emphasizes prayer as a personal relationship with God and as a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him.

The source of Centering Prayer, as in all methods leading to contemplative prayer, is the Indwelling Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The focus of Centering Prayer is the deepening of our relationship with the living Christ. The effects of Centering Prayer are ecclesial, as the prayer tends to build communities of faith and bond the members together in mutual friendship and love.

Anyone can start practicing Centering Prayer at any time. These suggestions from Thomas Keating are designed to deepen and enrich the experience. If twenty minutes is too long for you, start with five. If five minutes is too long, try starting with three.

Choose a sacred word.

- The sacred word expresses our intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
- Use a word of one or two syllables, such as: God, Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Mary, Amen. Other possibilities include: Love, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust.
- Instead of a sacred word, a simple inward glance toward the Divine Presence, or noticing one's breath may be more suitable for some persons. The same guidelines apply to these symbols as to the sacred word.
- The sacred word is sacred not because of its inherent meaning, but because of the meaning we give it as the expression of our intention to consent.
- Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period.

Settle into silence.

- Find a relatively comfortable seat so as not to encourage sleep during the time of prayer. Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight.
- We close our eyes as a symbol of letting go of what is going on around and within us.
- We introduce the sacred word inwardly.

When engaged, gently return.

- When engaged with your thoughts, gently return to the sacred word.
- "Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception, including body sensations, sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, plans, reflections, concepts, commentaries, and spiritual experiences.
- By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word" a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.
- During the course of Centering Prayer, the sacred word may become vague or disappear.

End the prayer.

- At the end of the prayer period remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.
- The additional two minutes enables us to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life.
- If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly recite a prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer, while the others listen.

DAILY OFFICE

The Daily Office is an ancient practice that uses daily prayers to mark the times of the day. For Anglicans, this generally comes in the form of the two main offices of Daily Morning Prayer and Daily Evening Prayer. They may be led by lay people and are said communally or individually. Other offices as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer include Noonday Prayer and Compline (an office said before going to sleep).

“The idea of some set form of Office...is based on a realistic assessment of human beings and of our prayer potential... The Office is a form of prayer which is independent of our feelings, though, of course it is often accompanied by, and arouses, deep feelings and emotion.” Kenneth Leech, *True Prayer*, p. 187-188
The Purpose of the Daily Office is twofold. First, it is a sanctification of time, a reminder that all time is sacred since all time belongs to God. Second it is a sanctification of the individual – a way to draw a person closer to God.

The Daily Office allows you to join your prayers with those of fellow Christians. This is a vitally important aspect with several corollaries. While individual faith and relationship with God are of vital importance, we are part of the larger body of Christ. That's why the language of the office is usually first-person plural, "we" not "I." If it feels strange to pray "we" by yourself, remember that you are praying in union with countless other Christians around the world. Your daily prayers join with those of others in other time zones to weave a continuous tapestry of prayer and praise to God, one that never ceases.

How to Pray the Daily Office

- Set your space. Get out your Book of Common Prayer and a Bible. Perhaps light a candle or set a home altar with religious symbols, a cross or icon.
- Find and mark the readings appointed for the day in your Bible. An outline of the Daily Office Lectionary can be found on page 934 of the Book of Common Prayer.
- Look through the office. select, and mark the prayers or other portions you will opt to read when the rubric requires a choice.
- Begin and end with at least 30 seconds of silence: use to focus thoughts on praise of God
- Speak office aloud in a reverent but not overly slow way.
- Develop your own personal piety and a system of prayer positions including sitting, standing, and kneeling for different portions of the office.
- Follow the order of worship. You might feel compelled to add additional prayers or spiritual practices. Save these for a time outside of the office.

As You Practice

- Pray as you can, not as you can't. Find a pattern and rhythm that works for you, one size does not necessarily fit all. Some prefer contemporary language, some traditional. Some find it easier to pray in the morning or evening.
- Seek to pray whether you feel like it or not. Some days you just won't feel like praying. And it is on these days that the fixed pattern of the Office is most helpful.
- Be kind and forgiving with yourself—the Daily Office is all about marinating yourself in prayer, scripture and worship—it's not about saying exactly the right number of prayers or trying to be a "Super" Christian.
- If for some reason you get off track, don't try to play "catch up." Simply jump back in the stream and continue on.

IGNATIAN EXAMEN

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern God's direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience.

The method presented here is adapted from a technique described by Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. St. Ignatius thought that the Examen was a gift that came directly from God, and that God wanted it to be shared as widely as possible. One of the few rules of prayer that Ignatius made for the Jesuit order was the requirement that Jesuits practice the Examen twice daily—at noon and at the end of the day. It's a habit that Jesuits, and many other Christians, practice to this day.

Become aware of God's presence.

Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

Review the day with gratitude.

Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

Pay attention to your emotions.

One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings? God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.

Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Look toward tomorrow.

Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask God for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

End the prayer.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Our Father.

ANGLICAN ROSARY

The practice of praying with beads for Christians is believed to originate with the Desert Fathers around the 3rd and early 4th centuries where they carried pebbles in a pouch for counting prayer. These pebbles eventually became beads and were strung on cord. Over the years the beads have transformed and changed to various styles and types depending on the religious group or personal need. In the 1980's a group of Episcopal parishioners were contemplating the use of an ancient practice of praying with beads and they developed the simplified Anglican prayer beads. Prayer beads and rosaries have remained an important part of spiritual practice providing aid in meditation and prayer.

The simple act of using Anglican Prayer Beads can deepen and transform our devotions into a richer spiritual experience. Praying with beads provides a tactile way to slow down our busy lives, becoming more focused in the moment while meditating upon our prayers. A rosary helps us take the time to notice what we are doing, feeling and thinking at the time we are actually doing, feeling and thinking it by slowing down these processes bead by bead, or one prayer at a time. God is part of our everyday lives, paying attention to God and focusing on God's kingdom is a fundamental practice of Christian mindfulness.

Anglican prayer beads are composed of a cross and 33 beads, 5 large and 28 small beads. Thirty-two of the beads form a circle, with one large bead and the cross outside the circle. The thirty-three beads remind us of the number of years of Jesus' life on earth before his ascension to heaven. Using Anglican prayer beads is fairly simple, and flexible, you may design a prayer routine of your own choosing with this type of rosary. There are no set or assigned prayers, the choice is yours.

Many formulated Anglican rosary prayers are pieced together from the Bible scriptures. You may choose to pray through each and every bead or maybe you prefer to simply hold the beads in your hands while you pray.

Praying with the Rosary

When praying with the beads, begin with the cross. Hold the cross in one hand and acknowledge God's presence while saying your opening prayer.

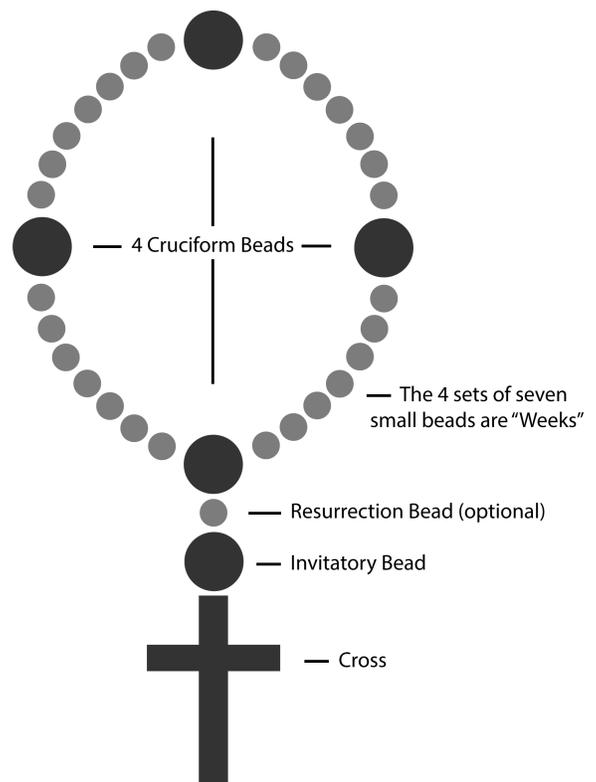
Next, move to the invitational bead and say your chosen prayer. Some prayer beads include an additional small bead just above the invitational, this is often referred to as the Resurrection bead and signifies a reminder that Christ lives on.

Move your fingers up to the cruciform bead above the Invitational bead and say your chosen prayer. On this bead and the three similar it is common to repeat a verse from Scripture.

Move your fingers up to the first set of beads to the right (you will be praying in a counterclockwise direction). Grasp the first bead and say your chosen prayer. Repeat this prayer on the next six beads if desired.

Move your fingers to the next cruciform bead and say your chosen cruciform prayer.

Continue with your prayers around the circle.

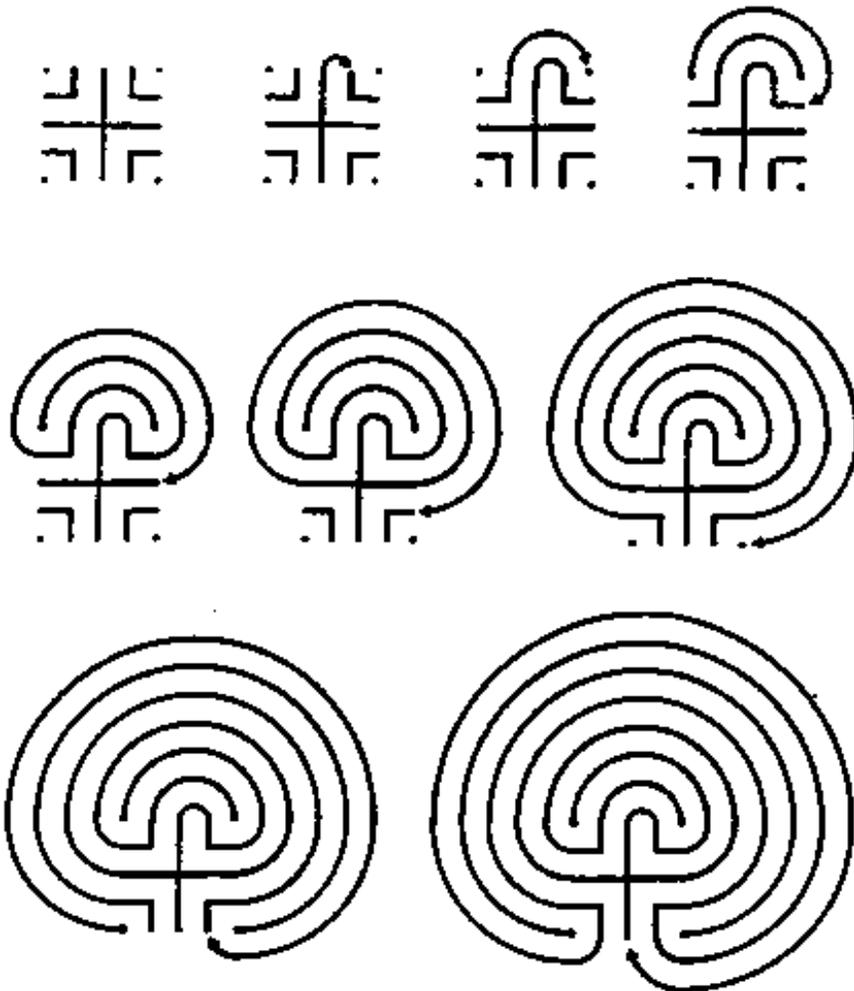


LABYRINTH

To walk a labyrinth is to step into an ancient spiritual space and make a personal journey of discovery and exploration. It is a journey where you might release tensions, concerns or distractions on the way in, be open to receiving insights and inspiration at the center and return uplifted, blessed and renewed. Labyrinths are ancient spiritual pathways found across the world and embraced in Medieval times and since as a path for prayer and reflection. A labyrinth is different from a maze. A maze is full of dead-ends and tricks. A labyrinth has only one path that always leads to the center. Labyrinths offer a rich and beautiful stilling space in our busy world. The steady walking gives the mind some space to think, reflect and perhaps renew and re-balance inner thoughts on the journey through life.

Find somewhere quiet to sit with your labyrinth. You may wish to light a candle or play soft music. Allow yourself to become still and settled. Let your breath be soft and place yourself consciously in the present moment. When you are ready, slowly trace the labyrinth path with a finger, use a finger on the hand that you do not write with, just let your thoughts come to the surface and let them flow, then release them. When you reach the center, rest and consider your thoughts. Pause for a while and spend some time reflecting and receiving new thoughts, feelings and blessings. When you are ready return along the same path recognizing and reflecting on any changes in feelings, any inspiration received or any new decisions made. When you exit the labyrinth gently place the palm of your hand over the labyrinth in a moment of respect for your experience. If you keep a journal you may like to creatively write or draw some words, symbols or phrases to acknowledge and remember this time of reflection.

Draw Your Own Labyrinth



THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Theological Reflection is a way of exploring the deeper meaning of something and looking for the presence of God there. It is something many people practice intuitively for many years. It is a spiritual practice engaged with more intention and in a more defined way in the Education for Ministry (EfM) community. This way of reflecting can begin with almost anything – a poem, a song, a passage of scripture, a scene from a movie, a long-held belief, a bit of homespun wisdom, or simply an experience that left you perplexed or frustrated. What I find most meaningful about the practice of theological reflection is discovering the deeper meaning of the day-to-day experiences of my life. As we begin to see our lives more and more through the lens of our faith story, this story then becomes a living story and our faith comes alive in surprising and inspiring ways. So, how does one practice this spiritual exercise called Theological Reflection?

Focusing

It starts with selecting a focus, something to reflect on. For folks who are new to theological reflection, I invite you to start with some experience from your day-to-day life . . . an encounter at the grocery store that gave you pause, a troubling interaction on Facebook, or some encounter with nature that filled you with wonder. What feelings and thoughts did it spark? Where was the energy or emotion strongest for you? It might help to come up with an image or metaphor that captures the emotion of your focus by getting artistic with it and actually drawing or coloring the image or metaphor.

Exploring

The next step is to explore this focus or image theologically, using words from our faith tradition, like creation (original goodness or wholeness), sin (brokenness or alienation), judgment (recognition), repentance (reorientation), and redemption (restoration). Some theological questions I like to ask of any image or metaphor are: What does this image tell me about God? What does it tell me about being human? What does it tell me about the relationship between God and humanity? Where is God in this?

Connecting

Once we have explored our image theologically, it is time for step three, connecting with the four sources of wisdom. This is where we are invited to listen for wise voices from our **faith tradition**, our **culture**, our own **experience**, and our deeply held **beliefs and opinions**. We might ask ourselves if this image reminds us of a particular passage of scripture, a hymn, a favorite part of the liturgy, or some writings by Christians throughout history. If so, take the time to look them up and consider how they inform the image you have chosen. In the same way we might ask ourselves if the image reminds us of something from popular culture – a song, movie, book, or memorable words from a respected or famous person. Does the image bring to mind some past or present incident in your life? Has this reflection on the image caused you to re-examine your beliefs or opinions?

The purpose here is to intentionally bring these voices of wisdom into the conversation so that through them, God might speak to you and your topic of reflection in unexpected but helpful ways. This is often the point where an epiphany might happen – an unexpected insight that seems revelatory.

Applying

The last step of the process is application to one's life. The question now becomes, "How is this reflection inviting me to live my life differently?"

RECOMMENDED READING

If you are looking for ways to continue your own spiritual growth during this time we commend to you the following books.

Being Disciples – Rowan Williams

“Discipleship,” says Rowan Williams in this companion to his best-selling *Being Christian*, “is a state of being. Discipleship is about how we live; not just the decisions we make, not just the things we believe, but a state of being.” Having covered baptism, Bible, Eucharist, and prayer in *Being Christian*, Williams turns his attention in this book to what is required for us to continue following Jesus and growing in faith. In his typically gentle, inviting, pastoral writing style, Williams offers biblically grounded wisdom for Christians at all stages of their journeys as disciples of Jesus.

Stand Your Ground – Kelly Brown Douglas

The killing of Trayvon Martin, an African-American teenager in Florida, and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, brought public attention to controversial "Stand Your Ground" laws. The verdict, as much as the killing, sent shock waves through the African-American community, recalling a history of similar deaths, and the long struggle for justice. On the Sunday morning following the verdict, black preachers around the country addressed the question, "Where is the justice of God? What are we to hope for?" This book is an attempt to take seriously social and theological questions raised by this and similar stories, and to answer black church people's questions of justice and faith in response to the call of God.

The Universal Christ – Richard Rohr

Drawing on scripture, history, and spiritual practice, Rohr articulates a transformative view of Jesus Christ as a portrait of God's constant, unfolding work in the world. “God loves things by becoming them,” he writes, and Jesus's life was meant to declare that humanity has never been separate from God—except by its own negative choice. When we recover this fundamental truth, faith becomes less about proving Jesus was God, and more about learning to recognize the Creator's presence all around us, and in everyone we meet.

Made for Goodness – Desmond Tutu & Mpho Tutu

Now, more than any other time in history, our world needs this message: that we are made for goodness and it is up to us to live up to our destiny. We recognize Archbishop Tutu from the headlines as an inspirational figure who has witnessed some of the world's most sinister moments and chosen to be an ambassador of reconciliation amid political, diplomatic, and natural disasters. Now, we get a glimpse into his personal spirituality and a better understanding of the man behind a lifetime of good works. In this intimate and personal sharing of his heart, written with his daughter, Episcopal priest Mpho Tutu, Tutu engages his reader with touching stories from his own life, as well as grisly memories from his work in the darkest corners of the world. There, amid the darkness, he calls us to hope, to joy, and to claim the goodness that we were made for. Tutu invites us to take on the disciplines of goodness, the practices that are key to finding fulfillment, meaning, and happiness for our lives.

Faith at Home – Wendy Claire Berrie

Home (not the congregation) and parents (not clergy, youth ministers, or Sunday School) are the key mechanisms by which religious faith and practice are transmitted intergenerationally. Recent studies indicate that the single most important factor in youth becoming committed and engaged in their religious faith as young adults is that the family talks about religion at home. However, for many parents in the United States, religious language is a foreign language. Faith at Home will help parents learn this "second language" and introduce it to their children in simple, meaningful, concrete ways.

A Hidden Wholeness - Parker Palmer

In *A Hidden Wholeness*, Parker Palmer reveals a compassionate intelligence and informed heart. Here he speaks to our yearning to live undivided lives—lives that are congruent with our inner truth—in a world filled with the forces of fragmentation. Mapping an inner journey that we take in solitude *and* in the company of others, Palmer describes a form of community that fits the limits of our active lives. Defining a “circle of trust” as “a space between us that honors the soul,” he shows how people in settings ranging from friendship to organizational life can support each other on the journey toward living “divided no more.”

Pilgrim – David Whyte

David Whyte looks at the great questions of human life through the eyes of the pilgrim: someone passing through relatively quickly, someone dependent on friendship, hospitality and help from friends and strangers alike, someone for whom the nature of the destination changes step by step as it approaches, and someone who is subject to the vagaries of wind and weather along the way. The poems in *Pilgrim* explore themes of departure, shelter, companionship, deep friendship and the necessary transformations of friendship, the struggles at crucial thresholds and the arrivals that always become further departures, offering companionship along the way.

Receiving Jesus – Mariann Edgar Budde

So often we think of the Christian faith as an obligation or as a set of beliefs that we must hold. With this outlook, we can lose sight of what is most important: the invitation to experience a loving, personal relationship with God. It's a relationship we can trust, where we can find refuge and solid ground upon which to stand. The Way of Love set forth by the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop Michael Bruce Curry is the journey of a lifetime. It's a way of knowing God, receiving and sharing Jesus' love, and being a blessing to the world. Mariann Edgar Budde shares her thoughts on how the reader can come to know--to receive--Jesus more deeply in practicing the Way of Love. Through the seven practices that have been put before us: to turn, to learn, to pray and to worship, to bless, to go, and to rest, she will share biblical stories, wisdom from the Christian tradition, and her own personal stories of spiritual growth.

Damaged Heritage – J. Chester Johnson

In 2008, Johnson was asked to write the Litany of Offense and Apology for a National Day of Repentance, where the Episcopal Church formally apologized for its role in transatlantic slavery and related evils. In his research, Johnson came upon a treatise by historian and anti-lynching advocate Ida B. Wells on the Elaine Massacre, where more than a hundred and possibly hundreds of African-American men, women, and children perished at the hands of white posses, vigilantes, and federal troops in rural Phillips County, Arkansas. As he worked, Johnson would discover that his beloved grandfather had participated in the Massacre. The discovery shook him to his core. Determined to find some way to acknowledge and reconcile this terrible truth, Chester would eventually meet Sheila L. Walker, a descendant of African-American victims of the Massacre. She herself had also been on her own migration in family history that led straight to the Elaine Race Massacre. Together, she and Johnson committed themselves to a journey of racial reconciliation and abiding friendship.

