

captured your attention? What might God be communicating to you through this passage?

Thursday, September 17

The spiritual practice we're exploring today is Visio Divina. Read Exodus 3:1-4. Do we see what is happening around us? In this story, Moses notices a bush that is on fire but not being consumed. As he notices the bush, he connects with God. Often we pray with our eyes closed, but Visio Divina asks us to pray with our eyes open! Visio Divina is similar to Lectio Divina, except that it uses a picture rather than a scripture text. Find a photo, image, painting, sculpture, or spot in nature to view. As you look at the image, first take notice of the first detail that catches your eye. Spend a minute or more looking at this detail. What is it? Why does it interest you? Then draw your eyes out to see the whole picture. Spend a minute gazing over the image. What does it make you feel? How does this connect with your faith or life? Finally, spend a minute in conversation with God. Tell God what you see in the image and how you feel it responds to your life and faith. Make sure to listening for God's reply.

Friday, September 18

Today we like to expose you to Centering prayer. It is a method of reducing obstacle to contemplation and becoming aware of God's presence by withdrawing our attention away from ordinary flow of thoughts. We first become quiet and still to listen for God. Think of the words of the Psalmist, "Be still, and know that I am God." First, you choose a word that will help you refocus on your goal to become fully aware of God's presence. Words such as "Lord," "Jesus" or "peace." Second, sit comfortably so as to remove distractions for your contemplation. Third, silently repeat your "sacred word" as a means of centering your thoughts on yearning for God. Whenever you become distracted, repeat your word. The idea is to not simply "empty your mind" but rather deepen your contact with God. Give yourself about 20 minutes to really allow for this practice to open you to God's presence. Be blessed by God's presence that you may bless others.

Message Notes – September 13, 2020

It's About All the Children*

- I. Having grown up in a fairly _____ church in a very small town, my experience was there was always a _____ for me.
 - A. Though I felt welcomed and included in my church community, I realized the possibility existed for some to not feel a part of the _____.
 - B. There's a particular spot in our hallway that indicates a big _____ for our children.
 - C. Our staff and volunteers play a critical role of reminding each child that they have a place to _____.
 - D. No one should be without a place, especially as a _____.
- II. One of the overarching themes of Jesus' teachings and ministry is the _____ nature of God's kingdom.
 - A. The message is clear, it not about the disciples' status but about _____ those who live in the margins of society.
 - B. Children were not considered persons in their own right; they had no status or _____.
 - C. First, this is a _____ teaching about the status of children, but it is also a lecture and lab about inclusion.
 - D. The _____ who cared for the children also gained access to Jesus and the kingdom he proclaimed as close at hand.
 - E. Jesus tells his followers that it is Children who help us receive the _____ of God.
 - F. Through this _____, Jesus reminds us that children are people too.

*Mark 10:13-16

- III. There are many ways in which a person can experience the _____ that is possible with God.
- It's very _____ for people to say that they are spiritual but not religious.
 - While I was growing up was sort of the _____ – religious but not spiritual.
 - God wants to be part of our lives each and every _____.
 - My mom didn't need to be a faith expert. In fact, her vulnerability to share her questions with me taught me, as a teenager, that faith didn't require I know all the _____.
- IV. I went back to seminary to explore _____ in a more defined way – you might say an organized way.
- I began to wonder how our practice of certain spiritual disciplines affected our ability to articulate _____.
 - When we teach in our _____ the importance of our faith and support families in that developmental process, then the children and youth of our church will know that they belong to our community.
 - As each of us discovers our own _____ in articulating our faith, I believe we will discover that we have place in God's kingdom.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, September 14

During these next five days, we will explore a few spiritual practices and prayers. For today, we invite you to consider the more tactile aspects of prayer, meditation and spiritual practices. First, consider the physicality of your prayer time. Are you comfortable and free from distractions? Is the lighting enough to read if necessary? Are you apt to be interrupted? Second, consider the position of your body. Are you

sitting, standing or lying down? Are your arms stretched out? Do you have your palms pointed upward expectant to receive something? The third tactile element of prayer and meditation are physical things that help you keep focus in prayer and meditation; from icons, palm crosses, to prayer beads and the rosary. These prayer aids can be explored on line or contact Pastor Jack or Rev. Cora for assistance. For today, seek to be comfortable as you pray for yourself, family and our church. Be blessed!

Tuesday, September 15

Today's devotion is about Holy Listening. How many times have you encountered the phrase "The Kingdom of God is like..." in the Gospels? Jesus frequently taught about the kingdom of God by comparing it to an image or object with which people were familiar. Symbolic language helps both children and adults communicate big ideas with experiences that are already familiar. In our sermon on Sunday, Rev. Cora reference Leanne Hadley's Holy Listening Stones. Hadley uses simple pictures to connect with her children. Anyone can use these familiar images to help connect to experiences and feelings. For example, being drawn to an image of a footprint reminds us that we are walking an unknown path as the pandemic continues, but the image also reminds us that Jesus left footprints as he walked among us! Our listening stones helped us name something that was frightening us but also helped encourage us as we connected it to Jesus. Explore Holy Listening Stones at <https://www.leanne-hadley.com/holy-listening>

Wednesday, September 16

Let's consider Lectio Divina today. Lectio Divina is reading in the quest of God or reading for holiness. Its practice goes back as far as the fourth century. In that time, books were rare and a designated reader would read a passage several times so that those questing for God's presence and insight could from hearing God's Word to contemplating God's Word. First read aloud Luke 17:11-19 and then pray in silence reflecting on words or phrases that speak to you. Read the passage aloud a second time and for a second time reflect on words or phrases that speak to you. If you are with others, a different voice might be helpful. Read the passage aloud for a third time silently to yourself again reflecting on words or phrases that speak to you. What words