

Being silent, being in silence, waiting, and watching ... an Advent Quiet Day

Why lead Quiet Days?

We started Quiet Days for the congregation about fifteen years ago. I soon found that the preparation for the day and the day itself is very much spiritual practice for me! The themes come from books or themes I've read and want to share. The most recent book I purchased will create two Quiet Days' worth of material. In a work life of sermons, meetings, pastoral care, administration, and all the other stuff we do, this *work* provides spiritual content for my life, and so feeds me as well as those who attend.

Format:

We gather on Saturdays at someone's home at 10am for coffee to begin at 10.30am. At that point we enter silence for the time together. Being in someone's home is relaxing and meeting in the same place each time gives us continuity. People are encouraged to bring a spiritual book and note book if they so desire.

The time in silence is divided into four sections. Each section begins with some music (sometimes on theme, sometimes to provide a sense of peace and silence), a collect and then a brief talk perhaps with quotes and usually with 'entry' stories to ground the content. At this point I offer a series of questions which can guide a person's thoughts on the subject just introduced. These sections conclude with another collect and then a period of silence until the next session. We progress through the four sections. At the end of the time together we have a reflection and pass round a 'talking stick' to enable individuals if they want to offer their thoughts. We end with prayer and then break silence over a brown bag lunch. The time together finishes by 2pm. This recognises that people have busy lives and frees them to use the rest of the day for whatever they need to do.

Music: I tend to classical and liturgical music but that's just me!

So for this day I used:

R Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on Green sleeves
The Sound of Silence - Paul Simon
O come O come, Emmanuel
Of Eternal love begotten

Questions for the four sections:

Session 1

Q: Where are the 'deserts' in your life?

Q: Do you want to seek silence in your life for God?

Q: Do you remember your last encounter with God and how did it make you feel?

Session 2

Q: Do you crave silence in your life?

Q: What do you need this time of silence for today?

Q: How can you work to find silence on a regular basis in your everyday life?

Session 3

Q: Does God ever seem absent from your life?

Q: Are you able to stand still to listen for God?

Q: What would you like God to say to you today?

Session 4

Q: Do you ever pray without words?

Q: Does God speak to you without words?

Q: When will you give yourself this gift of silence again?

Final thoughts:

At Epiphany, we have held Quiet Days for many years and on average about 12 people attend, both working and retired people. It is a very important time together for people to feed their souls in the midst of challenging lives. It is truly about making time for God and for ourselves to be with God in community.

Please free feel to contact me to offer you more ideas, thoughts, suggestions and answer your questions.

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