

LIFE TOGETHER: A LENTEN CONVERSATION
THURSDAY, MARCH 14

At our January 26 meeting, we began a series of conversations around the theme of our “life together” in the Church, including local congregations, Transylvania Presbytery, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the global ecumenical Church. Some notes from our January 26 conversation are attached.

For this evening’s gathering, we will focus our conversation around the shared experience of the spiritual life, particularly during the season of Lent. Regarding the spiritual life, consider the following reflection from Evelyn Underhill:

My spiritual life is not something specialized and intense; a fenced off devotional patch rather difficult to cultivate, and needing to be sheltered from the cold winds of the outer world. Nor is it an alternative to my outward, practical life. On the contrary, it is the very source of that quality and purpose which makes my practical life worthwhile...Still less does the spiritual life mean a mere cultivation of one’s own soul; poking about our interior premises with an electric torch. Even though in its earlier stages it may, and generally does, involve dealing with ourselves, and that in a rather drastic way, and therefore requires personal effort and personal choice, it is also intensely social; for it is a life that is shared with all other spirits, whether in the body or out of the body, to adopt St. Paul’s words. You remember how Dante says that directly a soul ceases to say mine and says ours...Here all interpenetrate, and all, however humble and obscure their lives may seem, can and do affect each other. Every advance made by one is made for all...

(as found in The Westminster Collection of Christian Meditations)

With the personal, yet shared, nature of the spiritual life in mind, reflect upon the following and come prepared to continue the conversation:

Lent is a time to take the time to...

...let the power of our faith story take hold of us,

...intensify our living into Christ,

...experience a fresh, new taste of God.

How might these serve as invitation/description of the lenten spiritual journey, individually and together?

LIFE TOGETHER: A GENERATIVE CONVERSATION

NOTES FROM JANUARY 26, 2019

At our January 26 meeting, we began a conversation around our “life together” in the Church (local congregations, Transylvania Presbytery, PCUSA). Below are a few samples of the “group notes”* from that conversation.

Regarding question (1) - What do you imagine Jesus had in mind when he thought about his disciples’ (then and now) life together? What scriptures come to your mind that provide insight into his imagination?

The disciples and Jesus traveled together. When we travel together we have to get to know each other intimately, and we have to live with humor because we need humor to survive living so intimately...Jesus desired us to take care of one another...Jesus desired us to be kind to one another, and strangers, to surprise each other with kindness...Jesus desired that we connect with one another, including those who are going through similar life circumstances, and those who are of other generations.

Regarding question #2 - Recall occasions in your own experience when you caught a glimpse of Jesus’ imagination.

Working in the community with a congregation(s) of another tradition... A church session “stepping up” in leadership in the absence of a pastor...A ministers meeting just to “hang out” ...Christian camps...the PCUSA pension system...At retreats when we take time in solitude and together. Friendships require time...Trying to imagine ways to answer unanswerable questions...One night in a hospital ER when several gunshot victims - rivals - were brought in and the families of those “rival” victims came together holding hands and praying, while a homeless stranger heard the sirens and came into the waiting room to pray for them all.

Regarding question #3 - What might be the possibilities of, and barriers to, sharing life together in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Transylvania Presbytery, and/or your particular congregation?

Barriers: Denominational and secular politics...interpretation and understanding of scripture...geographic divides and distances...gender and age inequality in leadership...Presbytery “mono-culture” ...our own selves.

Possibilities: Conversation will help you understand, more important than changing views... We need to get over our fears... Sharing resources between flourishing and struggling congregations... More action, less words... Meeting and involving a variety of people... Mission unites us more than anything (e.g. ecumenical mission, local ministerial associations)

*Contact Mike Ward (mward@walnuthillchurchky.org) for complete and unedited notes from January 26.