CIRCLES OF INQUIRY: ANNUAL GATHERING, 2014

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

CIRCLE OF INQUIRY ONE: STORY

1) Share a personal story, experience or feeling (or a story of a person you know) of the joy or struggle of using a spiritual practice to help you through a “dark night of the soul” or other significant point in your faith journey. (If anyone asks, let each person define what “spiritual practice” means to them.)

2) What values have shaped your thinking and feeling around spiritual practices?

3) What do you celebrate, or grieve, as you consider how spiritual practices have been affirmed or discounted in your faith journey?

CIRCLE OF INQUIRY TWO: UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT THE ISSUE

Christy will lead them through a spiritual practice. Afterwards, share in your Circle:

1) What was beneficial or difficult for you with this practice?

2) What might be the benefits or barriers for a community of faith to develop such spiritual practices together?

SESSION THREE: COLLECTIVE WISDOM CONVERSATION AND HARVEST

1) What did you hear or say that surprised you?

2) How are you feeling as a result of these conversations in this moment?

3) What would you like to hear more about?

4) Suggestions from the group about how the regional body might move forward with continuing the conversation and forming additional circles? What would you like to see happen next?

5) What word(s) of compassion, support or grace you would offer about this issue?
Harvest from Spiritual Practices Holy Conversation

Many amazing stories regarding God and relational connections were shared. The larger font indicates what stood out the most from the conversations. The second items in the boxes point to the gifts of the experience itself and ponderings coming from that experience.

**Presence of God ...God opened...God leading**

- Hope for connection with God and others
- Awareness of God in all ...persons...creation ...experiences...transitions

**Discard judgments ...being non-judgmental**

- Engulfed with love and permission to feel and explore
- Freedom to seek without judgment and with love
- Active listening...listen...Be heard
- Naming the barriers
- Releasing judgments, barriers, and understandings in order to receive

**Benefits of sharing**

- Trust deeply
- Trust is essential for relationship with God and others

**What the Circle Experience Provided:**

- An opportunity to become intimate and trusting quickly and to have a depth of sharing
- Honesty and transparency
- A Safe place
- Development of relationship
- Willing vulnerability
- An experience of the presence of God
- A chance to feel seen and heard
- A confirmation that I am not alone in my longing for spiritual depth and connection

**Circle Experience Ponderings**

Is sharing easier with new persons than with our ongoing communities of faith?

How do we establish trust in our ongoing relationships as we seek to go deeper?
What might we do to overcome the fear or the hesitancy to engage in spiritual practices in our congregations?