

Intentional, regular, and consistent Practices of body, mind and spirit, both personal and communal

John Buttars

Within a few years of marriage, ordination and children, it felt as if I was being disemboweled by life. There were inner drives and desires, some of which I was aware, many of which were hidden in the deep recesses of my psyche. There were external expectations, traditions, hidden agendas, and settlement into a rural culture far removed from a decade of academic training.



I needed help. I turned to a year of supervised pastoral education followed by a call to Harcourt Church in Guelph in 1976. I was graced by several personal sharing prayer groups within Harcourt and by Guelph's Ignatian retreat centre. I began to experience silent retreats, spiritual direction and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. I am deeply indebted to the Ignatian Exercises and to my many spiritual directors.

The journey of the last 35 years has been a reorientation. From **reaction** to internal or external pressures, desires, challenges, or drives I have reoriented to **grounding** in intentional, regular and consistent practices. And I have found myself turning away from **spiritual practices** per se to **personal** and **communal** activities of **body, mind and spirit**.

Take one example: Humility. I have read about humility within the Christian tradition. I have prayed around humility through *lectio divina* and *gospel contemplation* (two activities in the Ignatian Exercises) and I have boldly asked God that I be given the gift of humility. But I have also acted humility out through bodily activities such as prostration. Our body, mind and spirit **know** in profoundly different ways. I know humility in a full body prostration in a way not possible simply through acts of study, reading or mental prayer.

Let the Spirit Lead...



This year at the Hamilton Conference Annual Meeting
The CAW Family Education Centre
ShIPLEY Avenue, Port Elgin
Saturday, June 2, 2012,
is a day for Spiritual Practice Workshops.

Registration is NOT limited to delegates to Conference.

You are all invited!

For more information on the workshops or to register online:

www.hamconf.org/AM.html

Let the Spirit Lead...

Lorna MacQueen
Hamilton Conference Minister- Faith Formation for Discipleship
The United Church of Canada

Let the Spirit Lead...
TOWARD
DARING DISCIPLESHIP

February
2012

Let the Spirit Lead...



Approaching
Spiritual
Practices



HAMILTON
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The United Church of Canada

Soul Moments

Kellie McComb



When I think of spiritual practices, I think of soul moments.

These are the moments in time when our soul feels a deep connection with the Divine Creator of the cosmos. Anything we do can be a spiritual practice if we are aware of each movement and breath we take, and conscious of how God is present in whatever we are doing. This is time to suspend our logic and reason, and allow the Spirit to guide our encounter with the Divine. It is a time to slow down and become completely aware.

The question is not, "What new thing do I need to add to my life in order to include spiritual practices?" The question is, "how can I nurture my soul's longing and be aware of God's presence when I do that?"

For me, spiritual practices often include some form of creativity. The creative energy that set the galaxies is the same Divine presence we can encounter when we connect with our creative self. I sit quietly with some art supplies and allow the Spirit to lead. What I create is not the spiritual practice. The process of creating, being aware of my thoughts and feelings as I create and where God is moving in the process, is what makes this a soul moment.



Whatever form your prayer life takes, may you nurture it daily and know you are not alone. Thanks be to God!

Spiritual Practice for Extroverts

Linda Clark

When I was in theological school, I learned that spirituality was something nurtured through quiet meditation, self-reflection and prayer so that I could only hear God's message for me if I was quiet. This theory was a challenge for me and it wasn't until relatively recently that I learned that it's okay to nurture one's spirit in community and in non-quiet ways!

One of my favourite ways to nurture my spirit is through singing ... now granted I can do this by myself, but it is not quiet! And if you happen to see me in my car and see my mouth moving, it's because I'm singing along with whatever is on the radio. Of course, singing in community is the best way ... hymns, praise songs, even certain secular songs do it for me. Anyone that has ever seen me singing in worship can attest that I seldom stand still when singing; I'm usually swaying, or doing little dance steps and often my eyes are closed.

There are many other forms of spiritual practice for extroverts ... dance, body movement/prayer, gospel contemplation, Bibliodrama, to name a few. To dig deeper into this area of spiritual practice for extroverts, I refer you to a book called "Spirituality for Extroverts" by Nancy Reeves. This book provides extroverts with exciting new ways of connecting with God.



An invitation

John Lawson



I'm afraid I have never outgrown the habit of New Year's resolutions and new resolves. It seems to come naturally after God's ever renewing gift of New Life that we celebrate each year at Christmas – God with Us. But struggling with this New Life and renewal is old despair. As 2011 closed I found myself increasingly despairing over the health of God's good creation. The nations gathering in Durban, South Africa to address climate change failed miserably. The record of our government of Canada is a disgrace. The tidal wave of changing climate is already beginning to break upon the most vulnerable and promises to wash over us all transforming this beautiful earth into what Bill McKibben calls *Eaarth* – something new, something of human creation rather than a living miracle that God has given to all creatures.

One of my resolves this year is to get out and walk on God's good earth. It never fails to lift my spirits and renew my soul. There is something about getting out and breathing fresh air, watching the birds, and seeing the trees and flowers that all speak of God's love and God's grandeur. Outside I'm taken into a bigger world – God's world. And paradoxically I feel both smaller (*"what are humans that you care for us?" Ps. 8*) and more precious (*"even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid."* - Matthew 10:29-31).

One of the things that truly excites me about our upcoming Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference is that together we will be able to share spiritual practices that give us hope, ground us in God's grace and strength in us for the journey as disciples of Jesus Christ. I trust that you will find something that quickens your heart, engages your imagination and raises hope for new expressions and ways of connecting with God.

And for those of you who like me can be filled with despair over our environment maybe you can join me and together we can share together a Walking Meditation to feel the miracle of walking on God's good earth.