

Case Study – Christ Church, Tarrytown New York

For a number of years Monday through Friday a small group of people (average 6-8) gather from 9-9:30am for a brief prayer service. We use various contemporary liturgies drawing on the prayers from the Iona Community and using the Wee Worship Book (Wild Goose Worship) of liturgies. We don't have a leader, except for the person who says "who will start us today?" and then we take turns going around the circle reading a portion of the liturgy. We meet in the chapel of the church, with movable pews positioned in a circle. The front doors of our church are open and a large sign outside reads:



Each morning we read the Gospel lesson for the day. The scripture is read, and then after a brief pause we share together how the scripture is relevant (or not) to our lives.

How do those taking part describe what is happening?

Susan "I feel like I'm on a submarine and each morning we dive down quickly to an incredible depth of sharing and understanding."

Pat "We come to pray, but it is the scripture that gives us guidance for our prayer."

Bob "Even though I've heard some of these stories many times, I always hear something new and different - maybe it's because I have changed since the last time I heard this story."

Howard "When we discuss the scripture we are not talking about what does the 'Church' officially teach us about the passage, but we share what we hear God saying to us and through us right now. We are always asking - "so what?" One day when we were reading Jesus words "about eating his body and drinking his blood" one of the participants who was new to the group interrupted the solemn reading and said "YUCK! That is disgusting!" We laughed hysterically for a few minutes and then had the most profound conversation about the radical self-offering of Jesus.

Joyce "It's important that we can laugh or say some of the outrageous things we are thinking. We're safe to be ourselves and engage with the scripture as though it really is a living word."

We have all found that hearing the scripture and discussing it freely, allowing each person to share convictions, doubts, fears and delights has made for a safe space to encounter God in the Bible. Sometimes we find a passage too confusing or troubling but then we know we can come back tomorrow and maybe we'll get some new insight and understanding -- or maybe not --- but we keep coming back.

Submitted on behalf of the Prayer Group - The Reverend Susan Copley

