

PARTICIPANT SHEET #1

Session 1: Living Teacher, Living Wisdom

Prompts for Discussion

1. What did you hear that feels particularly meaningful to you right now, either in your own journey or in your community of faith or our global experience?
2. Janice spoke of staying with the Sayings in the Gospel of Thomas (or in our traditional scriptures) until they sprout like living seeds. Recall a time when you felt compelled to keep at something until a way opened up. Advent is a time when we expect a “breaking forth.” Might there be something calling you to further study or action, to deeper reflection or prayer?
3. What favourite words of scripture help “wake you up”?
4. Talk about your images of Jesus. Who is he to you? In what ways does the image of Jesus as Wisdom Teacher speak to your experience or longing?
5. Advent is a time of waking up to the presence of God in the ordinary and in the special times. What helps you “open and activate a place inside you?” What practices assist you in waking up to the Presence of the Divine within and all around you?
6. Sometimes naming an intention helps support our waking up. What words would you use to name an intention for this Advent season? What practices might support your Advent intentions?
7. *Another way of asking #6:* How might you find a way to embrace the busyness of this season with gratitude and with a spirit of gentleness toward yourself?

Take-Home Meditation

“I who write this am Thomas, the Double, the Twin.
Yeshua, the Living Master spoke,
and his secret sayings I have written down.

I assure you, whoever grasps their meaning
will not know the taste of death.” – Logion 1, The Gospel of Thomas.

Logion 1 Thomas refers to “secret” teachings. Explore teachings in Paul’s writing where he writes about teachings that are “hidden in mystery.” Spend time with 1 Corinthians 2:6-7 and/or Ephesians 3.

Sit with a phrase from scripture that calls to you.

In what ways might your Living Teacher, who is not just back then but present now, be using these texts to teach you about “waking up.”

PARTICIPANT SHEET #2

Session 2: Waking Up to a Really Big Story

Prompts for Discussion

1. Invite participants to share one or two highlighted/underlined phrases and why they noted them as important. Where were the exclamation points marking a new or surprising thought? What invitations might you be hearing in these exclamation points?
2. What is usually going on for you when you say, “I don’t feel very Christmassy.” What is the one thing that would signal to your heart that there is something in the Christmas Story that is just for you this Advent?
3. Janice says, “Incarnation is the story of God embodied in all matter; God indwelling in all created material.” Talk about a time when you realized incarnation was bigger than the birth in Bethlehem and you saw God (or Divine Radiance) in something around you or between you and another or within you?
4. Here is Logion 77 from The Gospel of Thomas, an ancient Christian text:

“Jesus says
I am the light shining upon all things.
I am the sum of everything,
for everything has come forth from me
and towards me everything unfolds.
Split a piece of wood, and there I am.
Pick up a stone, and you will find me there.” (Lynn Bauman translation)

*What word or phrase leaps out at you?
Splitting wood is a mundane activity. What is your most mundane activity? Imagine doing it and hearing, “Here I am.”
How might you train your inner ear to hear this?
Stone is a common element. What will you hold in your hands today? How might you remind yourself to hear “You will find me there.”*

5. What does “The All in all” mean to you after reflecting on incarnation and the waking up to the Divine Now.

Take-Home Meditation

Spend time with Matthew 2:1-12. Meditate on the ways the trek of the Magi is like your journey through Advent this year. Wonder about the connection between the starlight and the light in their hearts.

PARTICIPANT SHEET #3 Session 3: Waking Up (again)

Prompts for Discussion

1. I wonder what you found most interesting about the sharing you just heard.
2. Janice says, “We are not called to *be* a child. We are called to be fully alive.” What does the image of being a “human fully alive” mean to you?
3. Use your imagination and the wisdom of your years to discuss why the Incarnation of God is found in a tiny child? What do children know about Life’s Source that we may have forgotten?
4. The writer Philip Clayton says: “When our eyes are open, we feel wonder; when our souls are open, we feel awe; when our hearts are open, we feel reverence for all that is.” When you recall your journey of faith are there moments of oneness or wholeness or wonder that stands out for you?
5. Sometimes we hear (or might even say) “Christmas is for children.” What causes people (or us) to say this? What helps remind you that the Divine Infant is born to awaken Joy in all of us?
6. In this season, what are the practices of playfulness that help awaken wonder, gratitude, or awareness in you and help you get ready for the Mystery of Christmas?

Take-Home Meditation

Nurturing thanksgiving with our hands. Pomanders were used in olden times as a way of providing a fresh fragrance in a kitchen, closet, or pantry. They were made in winter from oranges and cloves, and they lasted for a long time.

Use a whole, fresh, blemish free, orange. Tie a ribbon around the middle, from top to bottom. Tie another ribbon so that it appears your orange is now quartered. In each quarter you will be pressing in whole cloves.

Pierce the skin of the orange by pressing a nail or toothpick into the orange. Then press a whole clove into the hole. As you press each clove, **pray a thanksgiving prayer to God.** The smell of orange and cloves will fill the air.

When you have finished your pomander, sprinkle it with cinnamon powder and wrap it in tissue paper for about a month. Alternatively, to quicken things up, dry it in an oven on the lowest temperature for about an hour. When it has dried out, hang it in the kitchen or inside a cupboard where the smell will continue to fill the air for a long time to come. Continue to give thank.

(Credit: Carolyn Bindon. See: <https://kererupublishing.com/>)

PARTICIPANT SHEET #4
Session 4: To Carry the Light Within

Prompts for Discussion

1. What stood out for you in the reflection you just heard?
2. Tell the story of someone you know who you would name as “deeply inhabited.” What are the qualities that make them so?
3. Recall a time when you fully arrived at Christmas and inhabited that space as fully as you could. These are moments of conscious presence. We remember them in our body. We are awake. We carry the Light within. What practices help us wake up?
- 4, Incarnation is the story of carrying the Divine Light within. Janice says, “Incarnation is not a one-time that we re-enact or re-create each December 25th. The story is still unfolding. Take a moment to recall your past year. When were you fiercely carrying the Light within? What gift do you most need for the year ahead that will support the Light within and help you abide on the path of Love?

Take-Home Meditation

Give yourself the gift of space to sit quietly and read one of your favorite Christmas stories from the bible, a Children’s book, or recall a fond story from your childhood.