

Dear Reader,

Thank you for joining the *Way of the Spirit*. Whether you're a seasoned program participant or newcomer, this handbook is meant to help orient you to our unique community culture.

It unpacks our best intentions for who we are and how we interact in support of our core purpose—to tend our own and each others' lives in the Holy. Our shared soul explorations can be tender. We've found that naming and practicing our best hopes from the beginning matters more than we imagined.

In gratitude and joy,
Christine Hall, founder-director

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Handbook

A stylized flame logo in shades of orange and yellow, positioned behind the 'Way of the Spirit' text.

Way of the Spirit

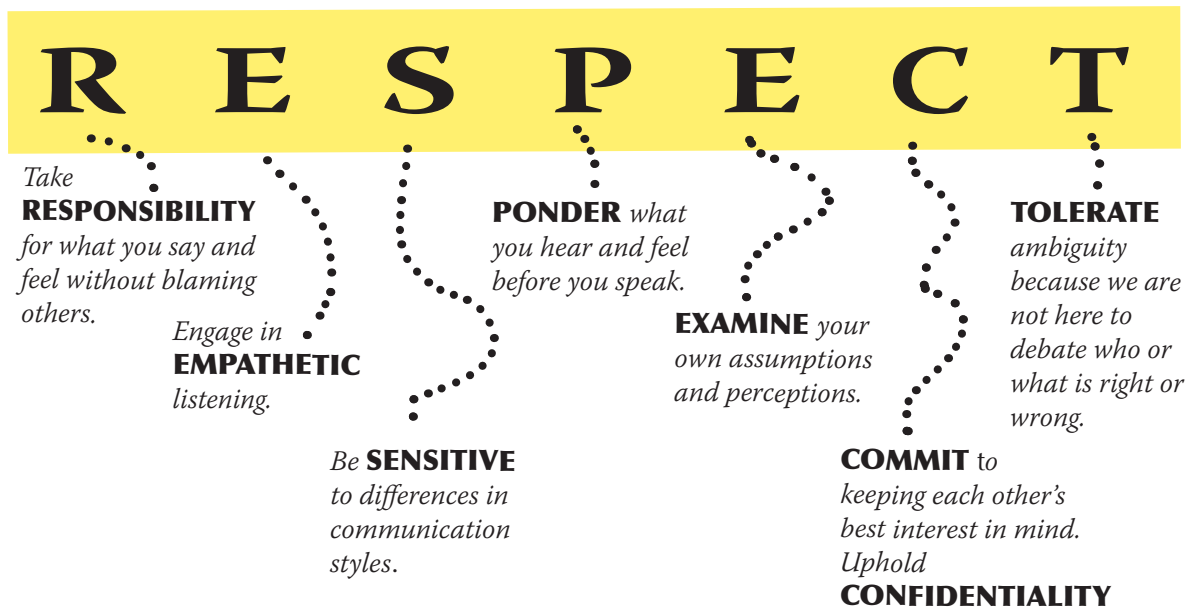
Welcome

The Grace Margin

Eric Law's¹ RESPECT community guidelines below invite us to offer a kind of holy hospitality to ourselves and each other in *Way of the Spirit*. They help expand a margin of Grace as we stretch into learning, sharing and reflecting together.

In the Grace margin, we experience God's invitation to grow into more of who we are meant to be in the fullness of faithfulness. We review these guidelines at the start of each *Way of the Spirit* session, and share responsibility for upholding them.

RESPECTFUL *Community* GUIDELINES



WHY?

- Listening over teaching, convincing, correcting
- Mutual understanding not debate
- A sturdy container for soul work

¹ Law, Eric H. F. *Inclusion: making room for grace*. St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2000.

Mutual Commitments in *Way of the Spirit*:

1. We prepare for and cultivate a prayerful tone, including holding each other in the Spirit during and between sessions.
2. We are fully present and engaged with the group during online sessions — Zoom camera active, and avoiding interruptions from other tasks, people, or electronic devices.
3. We begin and end our sessions on time. Please let Chris know if you can't attend or expect to arrive late. You are an important part of the circle. Pairs and small groupings are often discerned ahead of time.
4. We take responsibility for our own spiritual lives. People who actively engage exercises and readings get the most out of their time with *Way of the Spirit*.
5. We share authentically from our own experiences as we feel comfortable.
6. We each speak of the Divine in language that has meaning to us, often varied terminology—God, Jesus, Spirit, Creator, Light, Christ, or Father, Mystery etc. We listen for the Life of the Holy beneath or through others' less familiar terms. Read **"Listening in Tongues" p. 5.**
7. We notice when our own issues or strong emotions rise during sessions. They are a normal part exploring what is important to each of us, and what the Holy may be doing within you. Sometimes additional problem solving in counseling or psychotherapy can help us reflect and gain freedom in spirit.

Retreat from Home (Online)

How could you foster a prayerful space and time apart in your home?

Before Way of the Spirit sessions, participants are asked to reflect and pray around what they need to be more present to self, others and the Holy during online online group sessions. When you cannot displace yourself physically from the ordinary sights and sounds of your life, how could you foster a kind of temporary alternative reality for online retreat sessions?

Consider the baggage that comes with “screen time” in our society. Often screens ask little of the viewer. We listen or watch. We may be on screen to anxiously track what’s happening in the world. Or maybe we are pleasantly entertained and fill empty

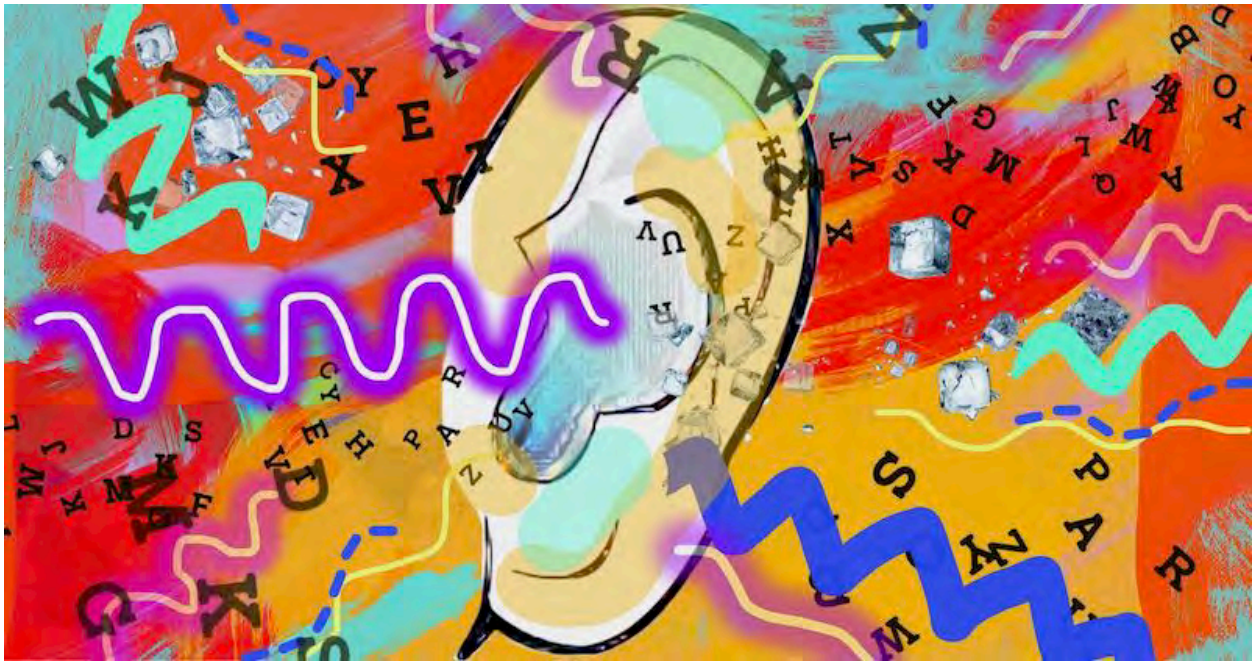
hours. Most of us have experienced tedious or chaotic online meetings. Plus, “Zoom fatigue” is a true physiological phenomenon. “Online” and “retreat” can seem somewhat oppositional at best

Instead, imagine how the best retreats, whether residential or online, invite full presence to self, others, and God. “Retreats” aim for intentional withdrawal from ordinary time and space. Way of the Spirit retreats ask for full engagement and active collaboration. How might you resolve the tension of expectations and best hopes for “retreat”? Answers will be unique to each temperament, living situation, and resources.



Here are some possibilities gleaned from research and conversation with other Zoom retreat facilitators. They aim to help make online “retreat” different than other online meetings:

- Abstain or “fast” from screens for a time before online retreat. The morning? A day before?
- Allow no interruptions from other electronic devices during retreat sessions. No email, texting, phones etc.
- Set up your screen in a different location, one not associated with regular online tasks.
- “Close the door”: Arrange for private space and sound. No one else needs to see or hear your device. Honor the confidentiality of other’s online sharing.
- Light a candle.
- Wear a prayer shawl.
- Settle to prayer before the session starts. Our online meeting room will open early for silent centering.



Listening in Tongues

by Christine Hall | Feb 17, 2020 <https://goodnewsassociates.org/listening-in-tongues/>

IF WE CARE ABOUT vibrant, transformative faith communities, how do we help it happen? That's the ideal we foster in *Way of the Spirit*—[formerly] an 18 month program for learning and spiritual growth from Quaker spirituality. Over the years, we've taken up the phrase, "listening in tongues" to remind us of both practical behaviors and an inner orientation to each other across our range of experiences and vocabularies about the Holy, God, or the Spirit.

I wonder how your faith community practices "listening in tongues."

In *Way of the Spirit*, we begin by recognizing that despite our differences, we're all sincere, faithful people. We may not have expected to encounter different ways of talking about life with God, but we are here at the table together. If we are willing to grow beyond what we know and think today, we can bear some discomfort in getting there. This is no small thing! We step forward in gratitude.

We also trust that we each have gifts and strengths to share in how we talk about the Holy. Our intention is not to minimize differences in theologies, but encourage us to walk in them authentically, listening and learning from each other. We all belong, yet we are not in this circle to fix or change each other. We honor that of God working within and through each person, and look forward to walking alongside each other as the Spirit leads.

Whenever we share in *Way of the Spirit*, we are invited to speak about God using words and concepts that have meaning for us. As we hear from others, we are invited to listen for the Spirit in/through their differing terms. Unfamiliar words may "snag" something in us that the speaker did not intend. Then we fall back on our community guidelines: We pause, ponder, seek to know and take responsibility for our own feelings, while we tolerate the ambiguity of our differences. Here's one example of how it works:

My story with “words”

Way of the Spirit is a collaborative effort across a historic division among Quakers in the Pacific Northwest: liberal and Evangelical. It’s been called a “convergent” program, with presenters from diverse worshipping communities. These branches of Quakers have been separated by decades of diverse theology, differing approaches to the Bible, the role of pastors, and much more.

I’m an ecumenical soul. My background includes forty years among liberal Friends, yet I honor Roman Catholic roots, and thrive on cross-denominational dialogue as faculty in Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry. In *Way of the Spirit*, I have co-taught with Evangelical Quakers for eight years.

An early experience with a guest presenter illustrated that we experience different God-language “hot buttons.” In open conversation I owned that I cringe inwardly when someone uses male pronouns for God (“He, Him, His”). Yet, I’ve come to honor that for others, God as “He” is endearing and authentic. I no longer need to explain or hear reasons for or against using masculine pronouns. I claim my inner woundedness and recognize the distance it has put between me and God and other faithful people. More recently, I have felt led to let participants be deeply true to their own God-adventure while I listen for the Spirit from which their words emerge.

Well, after my God-as-He confession, the Evangelical guest presenter casually admitted that one of his “hot buttons” was the use of the phrase “the Divine.” He said, “When I hear that expression, I usually want to say a few things about it.” Turns out he’s a serious scholarly theologian. In academia, he uses the phrase “the Divine” when attempting to be dispassionate and objective. It’s a way to not get involved personally or emotionally with “God”. I had to chuckle. I often use “the Divine” because to me it feels inviting, more approachable than a “God” label that scares some people away. You can imagine my surprise. Then we both laughed, because of course “God” is a synonym for “the Divine.”

John Woolman: “Where the Words Come From”

Many Quaker authors tell the story of John Woolman’s 1763 visit to the First Peoples in the wilderness of western Pennsylvania. He was a traveling minister from the colony of New Jersey, trekking ten days into the deep woods during a time of war and hostility between British colonials and the regional “Indians.” His goal was to learn from them and pray with them. He wrote of his sense of call that, “Love was the first motion.”

In the Native American village of Wyalusing, at the end of his visit, Woolman said he wanted to pray aloud for the people there. No one could translate well, so Woolman had the interpreters sit down. He trusted that if he prayed rightly, God would convey his prayer to the hearts of the listeners without interpretation. Afterward, one of the leaders of Wyalusing, a man named Papunehang, commented to a translator, “I love to feel where the words come from.”

Sensing where the words come from is a holy attention to the movement of the Spirit in the voice of others, even as the words themselves might sound foreign to us. This story is odd, unconventional, and beautiful from both sides. Notice Woolman’s humility and trust that no interpreter is needed as he speaks. Notice Papunehang’s openness to hearing something he loved through unfamiliar words. It was an authentic faith encounter.

Listening in Tongues

Now what happens if we take a familiar Bible story and turn it on its ear...? The early followers of Jesus’ Way told of a historic turning point for their movement. It’s described in Acts 2: 5-11. As background, recall that Jesus had died by torture, yet his followers were reporting visits and visions. They were gathered in Jerusalem for days of constant prayer to honor the Hebrew feast of Pentecost, the giving of the Law to Moses. The Spirit came over them like a great wind, or flames that separated and rested on every head. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.

I'd always heard this story interpreted as about the speakers—the miracle of “speaking in tongues.” What happens instead when I turn my attention to the people nearby? How does this unexpected outpouring play with the crowd? Some thought the disciples sounded drunk (verse 13)! But others “heard them preaching, each in their own language, about the marvels of God.” What made the difference, I wondered?

The story could also be called a “miracle of hearing” or “miracle of the ear.” The power and Life of the Spirit changed the disciples speaking, and the power and Life of God can change how we listen and are opened to hear “the marvels of God.” We could call it “listening in tongues.” I pray that we each recognize the Holy through unfamiliar words “in our own language.”

Linguistic Humility, Misplaced Courtesy, and Circles of Trust

One way to talk about listening in tongues is “linguistic humility”. This newer phrase comes from multi-lingual church congregations building relationships between English and Spanish speakers. Linguistic humility might be an invitation to consider our sense of privilege with language, even terms about the Divine. It asks, “Who’s vocabulary matters and why?” and “What is our relationship to people who have been hurt by misuse of the Bible, who suffer because of particular word choices about God?”

Another challenge is in holding back out of courtesy. Marge Abbott wrote a Pendle Hill pamphlet titled, *An Experiment in Faith* (1995), to describe sharing in a small mixed group of liberal and Evangelical Quakers. They didn’t wish to offend, not knowing how their words would be interpreted. She wrote that real breakthroughs happened when they

went beyond “niceness” and learned to trust each other. Marge described how they explored big questions.

At the time, issues included a universalist Christianity, and feminine aspects of God: [We] go back and forth unsuccessfully on these questions, but with respect for God’s work in each of us. Similarly, the growing trust among women of our two yearly meetings allows us all to speak honestly and be challenged to explore the unquestioned assumptions underlying our own faith and our practices. (Abbott 22-23).

Parker Palmer offers another helpful guideline for “listening in tongues” in the book, *Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life*. Palmer has a rule that listeners must follow if they are to be free for the open space in a Circle of Trust: “no fixing, no saving, no advising, no correcting.” As we create space for people to speak authentically and listen in tongues, Way of the Spirit groups take these practices very seriously.

The 18 months of *Way of the Spirit* are a gift for growing in trust of each other, and trust of God working within and between us in differing terminologies. We learn to share from the bottom of our hearts, with integrity, with authenticity, with honesty about our own spiritual experience. And when we listen we seek to hear where the words come from—beyond diction, beyond the baggage we might carry. Our sharing and listening are an ongoing act of contemplation, where we are each connected Spirit to Spirit beyond the words and deep down into the living Source.

The queries below may help you reflect:

1. What comes up from your experience as you read these stories?
2. What makes it easier for you to share authentically and listen in tongues?

WayOnline—For Resources and Participants' Program Reflections

Way of the Spirit offers a members-only website for program participants. We call it "WayOnline," and it's hosted by NING, an online community building platform.

WayOnline is an important "place" we experience the Divine with us in *Way of the Spirit*. The online format and distance between participants is no hindrance to the Holy One. WayOnline keeps us connected, engaged, and allows us to know each other far beyond what's possible in shared session time.

In WayOnline, *Way of the Spirit* participants:

- *Access program resources*—download assigned readings and session handouts
- *Write personal reflections* for a private program group
- *Read personal reflections* by other program participants and facilitators
- *Respond to others' reflections* to encourage their spiritual growth.

Participants join WayOnline and set up their own free account through a link provided by the program director. All mini-courses or online reflection groups postings are separate and private to each mini-course or reflection group.

Online Intentions:

- We tend community vitality by checking WayOnline regularly.
- Writing about ourselves may feel risky or vulnerable, so we are gentle with each other.
- We encourage openness and trust as we experiment, stretch and grow.
- What we share stays between us.
- We follow the R-E-S-P-E-C-T guidelines.
- We take time before responding.
- We don't fix, advise, or correct each other.
- We aim for mutual appreciation and support, rather than debate.
- We share from our spiritual experiences in the first person.
- We share the "language of the heart" over theology or philosophy. Less "I think..." or "I believe..." More "I'm moved by..." or "I experience/sense/feel..."
- When we get "snagged" we double check the writer's meaning with them.
- We recognize that tone and humor do not translate well into this medium, and will be cautious.

Why Write Personal Reflections in WayOnline

Written reflections help focus your thought and prayer around a theme, often in response to queries provided, assigned readings, or session content. This writing is meant to benefit your own faith explorations. As we share diverse reflections, threads of ideas may emerge that move us, or another's reflection may speak to your condition.

Approach: Personal narrative

- Write your heart/Spirit/God-story in the first person, "I..." Share your stories, your self-understanding in the Spirit.
- Writing in WayOnline is not a teaching or preaching exercise.
- Aim for sincerity over polished eloquence. Banish the inner writing critic. Really.
- You can respond to queries provided, assigned readings, session content, or share an important personal experience.
- We do not post long quotes, offer scholarly analysis, or report on what others think or feel. If you refer to books or readings, focus on your responses and what they mean to you. What resonated? How are you moved to integrate something into your life, prayer, actions? Links may be helpful. No footnotes required.