

Ingrid blogs about her surprises and discoveries in a Seven Sacred Spaces meet-up...

I start with a confession – when I signed up to be part of a Seven Sacred Spaces online meet-up, I hadn't realised quite what was involved even though I had read the 2009 booklet. I was expecting a study/discussion course with the advantage of having the author there to explain the tricky bits! It soon became clear that it was not going to be that easy but I am delighted that my expectations were surpassed.

I had spent several years as part of the team at Nether Springs, mother house of Northumbria Community, a 'new monastic' movement, and was used to the concept of the different rooms and had practised some of them, but this developed and illuminated my understanding and experience of them, challenging me to think about how these rooms could exist in my home and life away from the monastery.

Some of us had previously met in person but none of us knew everybody beforehand. Over the months we bonded as a group and were able to share deeply. We prayed for each other, sometimes we wept, often we laughed. It became a safe space in which to be real, with our questions and doubts, our hopes and our fears.

The concept of having 4-5 minutes in which to share your thoughts on a particular chapter of the book was helpful in distilling what had been learned about that topic during the month. It was refreshing to be able to speak without interruption and then listen to the responses of others. I found it harder to listen well to others as they gave their 4 minute piece and then to respond with what I felt God may be saying to them. It makes you realise how rarely any of us is truly listened to. The accountability of having to work through the selected material, trying to put it into practice and then recounting to others on that journey, is demanding but most helpful.

For me, the timing was no accident, it came as I was in a liminal place, waiting to move house, area and into retirement. I realised that it was no good waiting for the move to happen and started to put small changes into place, one step at a time. I have developed a pattern of prayers throughout the day which help to keep me grounded. I have journalled more and been more creative than for some years. A key development during this process has been consistency. I enjoyed the opportunity to ponder many areas of life and benefited from hearing the responses of others I trust and their insights into who I am. I have learnt more about myself, especially how others see me, and have become more grateful.

I am left with many questions and a sense of excitement as I live with them. I look forward to how Seven Sacred Spaces will develop further in a new phase of life and a different environment. I now know that there is no chance of this lapsing into merely a good intention, as I've agreed to host a new meet-up which has just started in 2023!



Seven Sacred Spaces support material

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