



# Session 1

## Engaging Sacred Space



### JustFaith Ministries

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### Overview of the 2½ hr Session

<b>75 Minutes</b>	<b>Part 1</b>
20 Minutes	Meditation
20 Minutes	Bearings Presentation
20 Minutes	Bearings Dialogue
15 Minutes	Break
<b>75 Minutes</b>	<b>Part 2</b>
60 Minutes	Sacred Listening ( <i>small &amp; large group</i> )
5 Minutes	Community Business
10 Minutes	Meditation



These notes are summarized in Pointers for Participants, Session 1.  
Review these comments BEFORE Session One.

## Open a Listening Space

*You gave me room when I was in distress.* Psalm 4:1

This first session invites us to consider how we punctuate our lives with sacred space: pauses for reflection; listening spaces to gain broader perspective, and room for compassion in our daily dealings with a world that is always knocking at our door.

**Graduated Silence:** As your group becomes familiar with the pace and tone of this process, the opening meditation and periods of silence will gradually extend.

*The just are those who hear the word and do it!*

Building on the opening retreat, the first two sessions focus on the practice of prayerful listening as: God-like behavior;  
a spiritual orientation toward neighbors and enemies;  
a humble stance toward the world;  
a way to embrace the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of life;  
an opportunity to welcome presence, the Christ among us.

## Practical Applications

Over the next few sessions, you are encouraged to integrate these contemplative practices into the daily rhythm of life:

- *Receiving and Returning the Day.*
- *Creating or enhancing a listening space, a sacred spot in your home environment.*
- *Making time for attentive, quiet prayer and alone time.*
- *"Touching the Holy," by connecting with people who are vulnerable or on the outskirts of our circle of care; allowing them to reach into our lives.*

During prayerful dialogue, encourage participants to share their own experience with any of these practical challenges.

## Moving from Heady to Heartfelt Sharing

The second hour of the session is dedicated entirely to prayerful listening. The listening modes (*large/ small group; inspirational and invitational*) outlined in the materials are designed to keep the dialogue reverent, participatory and dynamic. Be judicious and flexible in discerning how to facilitate the dialogue. Invite people to speak from the heart. Use these invitations to keep the sharing grounded:

*"Let us open our hearts to the Spirit!"*

*"Let us listen from the heart." "If you feel moved, share what is in your heart."*

If someone dominates or detracts from sacred listening, graciously intervene.

If needed, use the chime.

Thank the speaker and offer a comment like: *"Let's pause now, and listen to another voice."*

Encourage people to receive every sharing with reverence, resisting the temptation to offer direct responses to one another, allowing each person's reflections to stand alone.



## Guiding Questions

Use the prompts provided in the materials as guidelines.

Be at ease with pauses. When you feel the need, offer a new question or prompt.

## Refreshments

Ask people to bring refreshments, coffee and snacks to share at the break.

## Pearls of Wisdom

At every ES session, someone shares ONE brief quote from a spiritual reading text and ONE quote from the ES Journal. Time is set aside during Community Business for this brief sharing. A co-facilitator models this process for the first couple of sessions; identifying and sharing one quote from the journal and a current spiritual reading text.



## SESSION 1 • Engaging Sacred Space • 2½ hours

**You will need:** a small ceramic bowl of water; 2 pillar candles; a small cross; the covenant cloth; matches; a CD player and reflective music; bible (Luke 14:15-24); 2 Bearings letters (Shelley and Richard); refreshments. Participants will need journals and pens. Select ONE quote from the Prayer Journal and ONE from the spiritual reading text to share after the break.

### Co-Facilitator Prayerful Preparation

Arrive at least 10 minutes before the group. Set the room (circle of chairs with additional Bearings seat; small central table; candle; covenant cloth; cross; bible; reflective music; music player). Light the candle and have reflective music playing. Sit together in silence for 3 minutes.

**Silence**

**Silence**

**Silence**

Offer a word of blessing to one another. Alternating voices, call upon the Holy Spirit:

*Come Spirit of justice overwhelm us.  
Ignite in us the fire of compassion.  
To restore and renew*

*Fill our hungry hearts.  
Reshape our lives and send us out,  
The beauty of the earth.*

### Gospel Meditation (20 minutes)

Have the small bowl of water on the table.

When everyone has arrived, invite people to find their place in the circle and enter the silence. Introduce the silence with these words:

**Let us listen to the world!**





Invite people put everything down and sit in a receptive posture.  
Open **3 full minutes** of silence.

**Silence**

**Silence**

**Silence**

Strike the chime again to break the silence.

Encourage participants to become attentive to the rhythm of their breathing:

*We come here to catch our breath,  
to conspire with God who is intimate with all that is.*

(Omit this ritual if its Catholic flavor does not fit with your group. )

Pick up the bowl of water.

Dip a finger in the bowl and share these words with a sign of the cross:

<i>God KNOWS</i>	+	(touching your forehead)
<i>God CARES</i>	+	(touching your chest)
<i>God is INVOLVED</i>	+	(touching each shoulder)

Pass the bowl, hand to hand, inviting everyone to quietly repeat the gesture.  
Return the bowl to the central table.

**Pause**

Alternating voices, offer ALL or ANY of these comments for silent reflection:

*Spiritual life is all about spaces.  
It is about making space, and making space sacred...  
...space for all that can be experienced but not measured.*

**Pause**

*Living in a spacious way means clearing away, to make room for the world...  
The Holy Spirit is an **expansive** movement.*

<i>As our awareness deepens,</i>	<i>so our lives are enriched.</i>
<i>As our love broadens,</i>	<i>so our hearts stretch.</i>
<i>As our minds open,</i>	<i>so our kinship connections widen.</i>

**Pause**

*Like dew sparkling on the tracery of a spider web,  
spiritual practices illuminate the threads that link us all to all that is.*

**Pause**

*Opening a listening space means opening a door  
to the pains and the promises of God's world.*

*Gospel spirituality is all about opening:  
opening eyes, ears, hearts, and doors to other things, other ways, other people.*



Read the Gospel parable of the Great Dining Room: *Luke 14: 15-24*

Offer ONE of these prompts for silent reflection:

- *Where do you find yourself in this Gospel story?*
- *What does this Gospel say to our world?*

Pause for a full minute of silence...

**Silence**

**Silence**

**Silence**



...or use reflective music.

## Large Group Listening – Open Response (10 minutes)

This brief dialogue allows a few voices to be heard. Open the floor for those (2 or 3 people) who feel moved to share from the heart.



Strike the chime between each sharing and pause briefly.

Close with these words (from Psalm 4:1):

*O God, You gave us room when we were in distress.*

## Bearings Presentation (20 minutes)

A co-facilitator introduces the Bearings letter from Shelley Douglass, placing her picture on the empty seat, before prayerfully reading the letter aloud.

## Bearings Dialogue – Inspirational Mode (20 minutes)

Pause after the reading and final Lectio sharing.

Holding the candle, share one insight that struck you from the letter.

Pause before passing the candle to a neighbor on your left or right.

Offer this prompt:

- *What resonated with you?*

Remind people to pause before and after sharing. If someone does not wish to share, s/he holds the candle silently before passing it on.



## Break (15 minutes)

Select a reader to present the Bearings letter (*Fr. Richard Rohr*) at the next session.

If possible, match the gender of the reader with the author. Give the Bearings letter to the reader. Remind the reader NOT to make copies of the letter, but to reflect on it and come prepared to lead the Bearings process at the next session.



Call everyone back to the circle.



### Intimate Circles Dialogue – Open Response (20 minutes)

If your group includes six or more people, light a second pillar candle and divide participants into 2 smaller groups. One co-facilitator joins each small group. Locate the groups out of earshot of one another. Each group takes a lit candle, placing it at the center of the smaller circle. Keep the same circular dynamic as the large group. Open with a period of silence.



**Silence**

**Silence**

**Silence**

Offer ANY of these guiding questions:

- *Where is your holy ground, your sacred listening space?*
- *Who listens to you?*
- *As you listen to the world, what places or situations are crying out for attention?*



Pause before opening the floor for dialogue with these words:

*We are invited to listen deeply and share from our hearts.*

After 20 minutes, thank everyone for sharing and invite the group into moment of silence. Call the groups back to the large circle.

### Large Group Dialogue – Invitational Mode (30 minutes)

You could use reflective music to draw the group into stillness.

Offer these directions:

*We come to this circle not just to talk... but leaning-in to listen;  
not to tear down or take over... but ready to receive.*

*Let us make room for a wider, deeper presence,  
and welcome the Spirit that lives, moves, and breathes among and through us.*

Pause for a full minute of silence before presenting this guiding question:

**Silence**

**Silence**

**Silence**

*What kind of sacred listening space have you opened in your life?*

Nominate a person, inviting him/ her to share from the heart.

After that person has shared, s/he nominates another person in the circle.

*(If the invitee is neither ready, nor inclined to share, s/he can decline and nominate another person.)*

The process continues until everyone has spoken.

Thank everyone for sharing.

Close by inviting the group into stillness.





# Engaging Spirituality

Live deeply. Love broadly.

Community Business & Pearls of Wisdom (5 minutes)

*Out to the Light*

Remind people about their commitment to write a personal Bearings letter. The first personal Bearings presentations are offered by co-facilitators at Session Four. Inform everyone of the date and time of the next session. Refer people to the Pointers for Participants. **One facilitator shares a quote from the ES Journal and a brief excerpt from a current spiritual reading text. A second facilitator will bring their quotes to the next session.**



## Meditation (10 minutes)

Invite the group into **3 minutes** of silence with these words:

*Let's quiet ourselves so that the sounds of God's world, the joys and the anxieties, break through.*

**Silence**

**Silence**

**Silence**

Alternating voices, share these guiding words:

*Who do YOU find it hard to listen to?*

**Pause**

*You have probably heard (or used) the expression "what you need is a good talking to!" It's often said by someone who is frustrated in his or her ability to communicate or who thinks that more words will alter the other person's behavior.*

*Oftentimes our problems arise because we aren't listening to the person who is frustrating us.*

*Imagine how it would change the interaction if that person responded by saying, "What I really need is a good listening to."*

*The recognition that listening has the power to transform our relationships just doesn't occur to us.*

-Kay Lindahl

**LONGER Pause**

Invite everyone to stand and link hands. Alternate voices as you offer this prayer:

*God Knows... God cares... God is leaning-in to listen...*

*Consider all the voices crying out to be listened to at this moment. Add the sounds of creation groaning.*

**Pause**

*God, what is YOUR prayer in us for the world?*

*If there is in you a word, a name, a situation that cries out to be heard, share that prayer with us.*

**Pause**

When people have shared a prayer, conclude with this blessing:

*Let us bless one another with a word, a sign, a gesture of God's peace.*

**This concludes the session.**



# Engaging Spirituality

*Live deeply. Love broadly.*

Co-facilitator Afterglow (10 minutes)

*Out to the Light*

When everyone has gone, revisit the session together.

- Begin with a few minutes of silence.
- Let a grateful word surface.
- Offer a word of affirmation to one another.
- Share your response to ANY of these:

*I felt the Holy Spirit...*

*I was stretched or challenged by...*

*I have learned...*

Look ahead to the next session or activity.