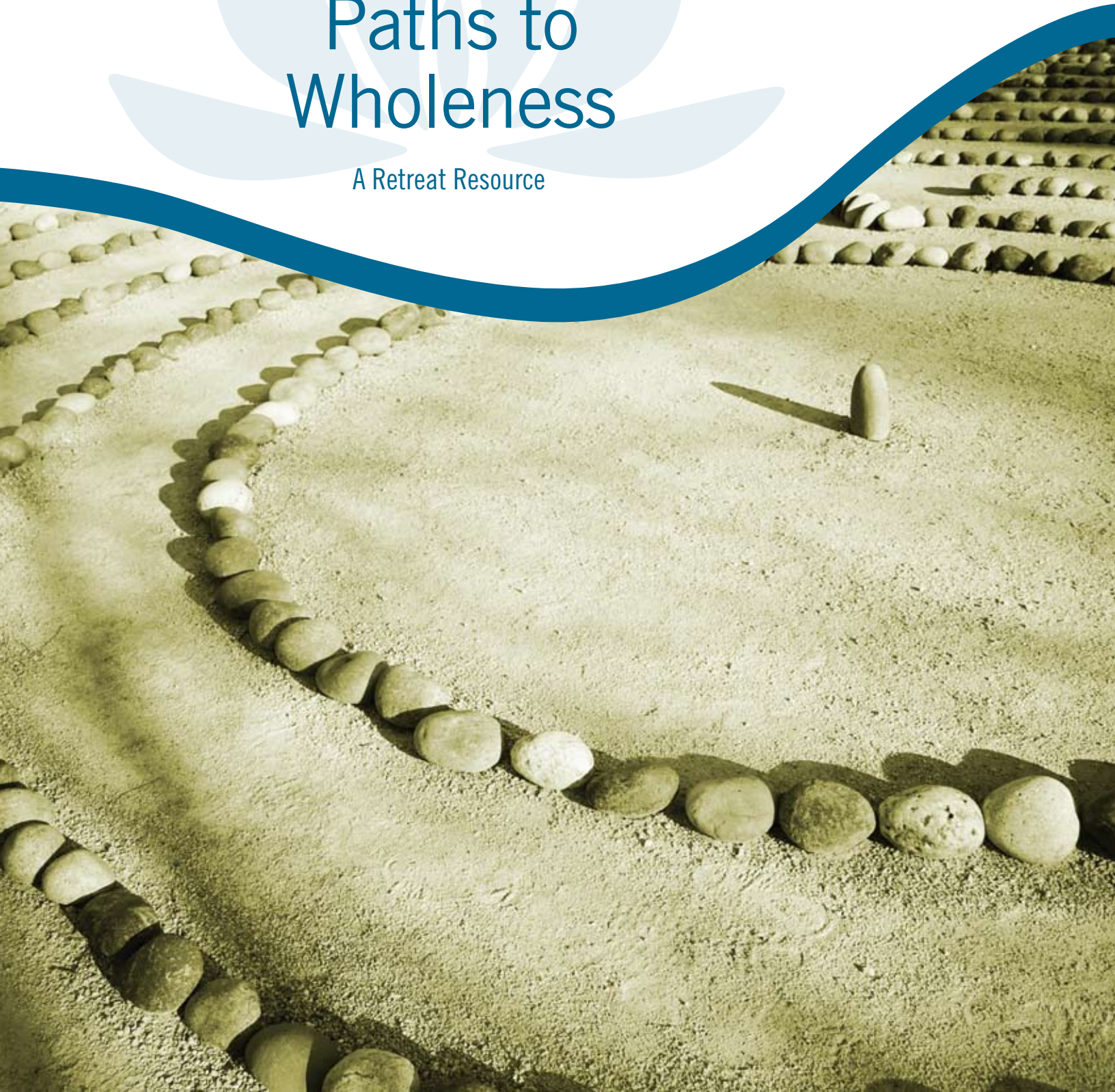


# Paths to Wholeness

A Retreat Resource



*Take a journey into spirituality  
and experience different paths  
toward God.*

This resource may be used in a congregational setting, as a conference event, or as a workshop during a gathering. It can be conducted over a period of several weeks or as a one-day retreat.



# Paths to Wholeness

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# Paths to Wholeness

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## Useful Tips for Leaders

Throughout the program, remind participants that this is an opportunity for taking a holistic approach to our spirituality. It is important to stress that this retreat is not about worshipping elements; it is merely an opportunity to name the vehicles of expression of who we are.

Leaders might find it helpful to read Corinne Ware's book, *Discover your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (Herndon, Va: Alban Institute, 1995), before the event.

### Sample event checklist

- Copy of agenda for every participant
- Copies of *Paths to Wholeness* for each participant
- Paths to Wholeness* opening and/or closing devotions
- Songbooks, such as *Worship Boldly (WB)*, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*, *With One Voice (WOV)*, and *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)*
- Goals and mission statement written on newsprint
- Spirituality Wheel with names of the paths
- List of the four paths experiences and materials needed
- Four tables decorated to represent the four paths
- Podium and clock
- Preferred music for breakout sessions

### Sample agenda\*

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 9:00 AM  | Welcome<br>Introductions<br>Mission statement and goals  |
| 9:15 AM  | Opening devotion   |
| 9:30 AM  | Spirituality and self-discovery:<br>A discussion         |
| 10:00 AM | Spiritual paths inventory:<br>A self-assessment exercise |
| 10:20 AM | Brief group discussion of results                        |
| 10:35 AM | 10-minute break  |
| 10:45 AM | Earth experience ½ group<br>Water experience ½ group     |
| 11:25 AM | Switch experiences                                       |
| NOON     | Lunch  |
| 1:00 PM  | Air experience ½ group<br>Fire experience ½ group        |
| 1:40 PM  | Switch experiences                                       |
| 2:20 PM  | Spiritual walk   |
| 3:15 PM  | 15-minute break  |
| 3:30 PM  | Jesus' spirituality                                      |
| 4:15 PM  | Learnings and call for commitment                        |
| 4:30 PM  | Closing devotion   |
| 5:00 PM  | Evaluation   |

### Paths to Wholeness mission statement

With the discovery of various spiritual paths,  
through listening to our tradition and  
embracing our unique selves,  
we will be so assured of the grace of God  
in Jesus Christ  
that we are compelled to act boldly on our faith.

*\*This is one of many ways you can use this resource with your group. You can also conduct this retreat over several separate sessions. Feel free to find a format that accommodates the size of your group and meets your needs.*



## Planning tips

### You may wish to plan this program for:

- just the women in your congregation
- your neighboring congregations or conference/cluster
- a synodical women’s organization retreat or convention
- a regional event
- an ecumenical gathering of women

### For your event, use space that offers:

- good seating and lighting
- a sound system
- accessibility, including breakout rooms

### The goals of the program are that each participant will:

- be able to recognize her own spiritual path as well as the spiritual paths of others.
- have an opportunity to experience various spiritual paths.
- discover the best way to develop her personal spiritual path, particularly through the breakout sessions.

### At the beginning of the program, share with the participants that:

- there is much wonderful material to be covered in this retreat; it is important to be faithful to the agenda.
- each of us is on her own journey. At the end of this time together, it is hoped that we will have the tools to continue the journey.
- the intent of this program is to guide each individual to a greater awareness of her own spiritual style, not to measure spirituality. Spiritual depth cannot be measured.

## Sample opening devotion

Opening hymn *Spirit of Gentleness* (ELW 396)

### LITANY

- L:** As a community of women created in the image of God,
- P:** **creative, spiritual, loving**
- L:** called to discipleship in Jesus Christ,
- P:** **following, learning, growing**
- L:** empowered by the Holy Spirit,
- P:** **gifted and gifting**
- L:** we commit ourselves to grow in faith,
- P:** **continuing ever on the journey as perpetual pilgrims with Christ**
- L:** to affirm our gifts,
- P:** **living out though grace our life in Christ**
- L:** to support one another in our callings,
- P:** **being community to one another through Christ**
- L:** to engage in ministry and action,
- P:** **serving through the love that is Christ**
- L:** to promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.
- P:** **Sharing the shalom that is God’s will for all of creation.**

### PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we have been joined with you through our baptism and invited to journey into the new life that is ours through Christ. Walking in the strength of your grace, we come together in this place from many places and by many paths. The paths we have taken throughout our lives bring us here as the wandering children we are. May we share our experiences as we travel with one another through this time together, emerging renewed and seeking ways to grow more fully into the life that is ours through Christ. **Amen**

Closing hymn *Seek Ye First* (WOV 783)



## Introducing Spirituality

In her 1995 book, *Discover Your Spiritual Type*, author Corinne Ware provides insight to individuals on a spiritual journey who want to explore and grow in their walk. This *Paths to Wholeness* program is based on Ware’s book, which has been used in many of our synods and congregations.

### During this retreat each participant will:

- explore together four spirituality types.
- identify her dominant path or paths of spirituality.
- discover other paths of spiritual expression.
- confess that Lutherans believe the Holy Spirit plants faith in us at our baptism.
- rejoice in a faith that matures as we grow in knowledge and understanding of our relationship to God.

### Definitions that shape our common understanding

*Spirituality* is the state, quality, or fact of being spiritual.

*Spiritual*, from the Latin word that means “of breathing of wind,” can encompass these meanings:

- of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of a spirit
- of, concerned with, or affecting the soul
- of, from, or relating to God
- of or belonging to a church or religion

### Individual spiritual self-assessment: questions for discussion

**DO I (and does everyone) have a spiritual self? Does a person’s belief system make a difference in his or her understanding of spirituality?**

**HOW WELL does the spiritual style of my congregation fit with my personal spiritual style? Why does it matter?**

**WHAT IS my own personal style of spirituality? Why do I need to know?**

**WHAT IS the best way for me to develop my spiritual life? Am I stirred by vivid language and new thoughts, or moved by music or creative expression?**

**WHY IS my expression of spirituality different from that of others? We all differ from others in many ways. Doesn’t it stand to reason that we would differ in our individual spiritual expression as well?**



## Self-Discovery: Behavior, ritual, and tradition

Before looking at the spiritual path inventory and its meaning for each of us, it is important to remind ourselves of the diversity involved in being human! As we all know from our variety of experiences, we are made up of our past and our present, what we have done and what we are doing—our behavior.

There are two words that are influential in determining our behavior: ritual and tradition.

**Behavior** is defined as one's actions or reactions under specified circumstances. Rituals and traditions contribute to determining your behavior.

**Ritual** (rite) is detailed method or procedure faithfully or consistently followed; the word *ritual* is used particularly when referring to conducting a religious or solemn ceremony.

**Tradition** is mode of thought, customs, and usages transmitted from one generation to another; a time-honored practice or a set of such practices.

Do not lose sight of these words—behavior, ritual, and tradition—and their influence and effect as you begin to look at various spiritual paths and personal spiritual preferences.

**What is a ritual that is important to you?**

**Do you see a connection between that behavior and a ritual or tradition?**

**What is a tradition that is important to you?**

**We may think that the way we were taught a particular ritual or behavior is the only correct way to do it. This idea often leads to conflict. Think of a ritual or tradition that might be meaningless if we stopped to think rationally and logically about it. Some may even be downright funny in their origin!**

**What is a behavior you appreciate about yourself?**



## A spiritual paths inventory

- The beauty of doing self-assessment is that there are no right or wrong answers. Your honest discernment is important as you respond to the questions. Strange as it may seem, recording your initial, gut-level response will give you a more accurate view than pondering over each question.
- This program uses the self-assessment idea to help you discover your dominant spirituality path or paths. Many people have one dominant spiritual path, but it is very possible to have more than one.
- The purpose of this exercise is to draw a picture of your own personal style of spirituality. Look at the circle in the Spiritual Wheel on the next page, divided into quadrants labeled 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each quadrant stands for a type of spiritual expression. This is where you will “draw a picture” of your spiritual style.

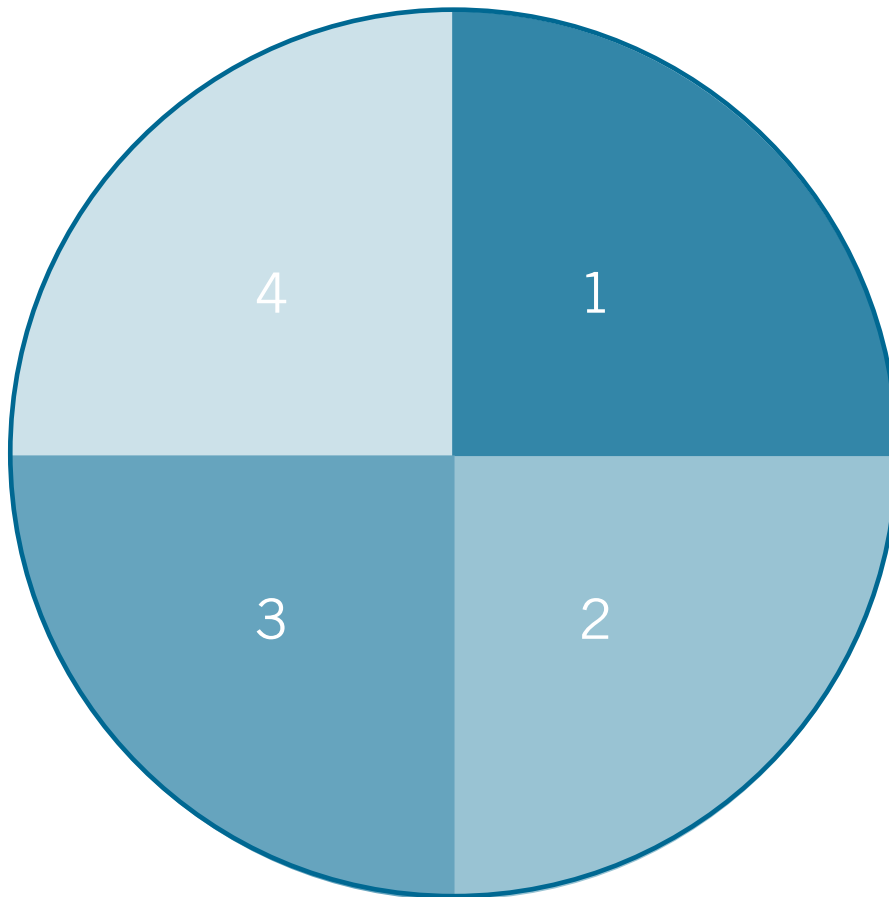
## Directions

1. Read the first set of statements on page 7.
2. Circle the statement or statements that describe what you *personally* prefer as part of your spiritual experience.
3. Continue for the remaining 11 sets of statements.
4. Then, go back to the numbered Spiritual Wheel on page 6 and match each number circled with the quadrant number in the circle.
5. Draw a spoke-line in the quadrant for each number.
6. If no statement in a set described you, draw no line.
7. Finally, you will then transfer those numbers into words given on the final wheel.
8. The result will be a portrait of your personal spiritual style(s), or the spiritual path(s) you commonly use.

# The Spiritual Wheel: A Selector for Spiritual Type Diagram A

Corinne Ware, D. Min.

Based on the spirituality typology by Urban T. Holmes



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## Spiritual paths inventory: set of statements

### The order of worship

1. A carefully planned and orderly worship program is a glory to God.
2. A deeply moving and spontaneous meeting is a glory to God.
3. Simplicity and silence are important elements needed for worship.
4. A worship service is not essential, but ordering ourselves to God's service is important.

### Time

1. Stick to announced beginning and ending times of worship services.
2. It is important to extend the meeting time if one feels led to do so.
3. All time is God's time. A sense of timelessness is important.
4. Gather whenever and as long as you need in order to accomplish the task.

### Prayer

1. Words express poetic praise; we ask for knowledge and guidance.
2. Let words and feelings evoke God's presence in this moment.
3. Empty the mind of distractions and simply *be* in the presence of the Holy.
4. My life and my work are my prayer.

### Music

1. Music and lyrics express praise to God and belief about God.
2. Singing warms and unites us and expresses the soul's deepest feeling.
3. Chant and tone bring the soul to quietness and union with God.
4. Songs can mobilize and inspire us to greater effort and dedication.

### Preaching

1. The word of God, rightly proclaimed, is the centerpiece of worship.
2. The gospel movingly preached is the power of God to change lives.
3. Proclamation is heard when the Spirit of God speaks to the inward heart.
4. What we do is our "preaching" and speaks louder than anything we say.

### Emphasis

1. A central purpose is that we fulfill our vocation (calling) in the world.
2. A central purpose is that we learn to walk in holiness with the Lord.
3. A central purpose is that we be one with the creator.
4. A central purpose is that we obey God's will completely.



### Support of causes

*(If necessary, circle the words that apply and select the one with the most circles.)*

1. **SUPPORT**  
 seminaries                      publishing houses  
 scholarship                      preaching to others
2. **SUPPORT**  
 evangelism                      missions  
 spreading the word on television and radio
3. **SUPPORT**  
 places of retreat      spiritual direction  
 liturgical reform
4. **SUPPORT**  
 political action to establish justice in society and  
 its institutions

### Criticism

1. Sometimes I am said to be too intellectual, dogmatic, and “dry.”
2. Sometimes I am said to be too emotional, dogmatic, and anti-intellectual.
3. Sometimes I am said to be escaping from the world and am not realistic.
4. Sometimes I am said to have tunnel vision and am too moralistic.

### Dominating theme

*(If necessary, circle the words that apply and select the one with the most circles.)*

1. discernment                      discipline                      knowledge  
 order                                  grace                                  justification
2. love                                  conversion                      witness  
 spontaneity                      sanctification
3. poverty                              humility                      wisdom  
 letting go                              transcendence
4. simplicity                              purity of heart      action  
 temperance                              obedience                      martyrdom

### Membership criteria

1. Assent to doctrine      baptism  
 endorsement by group
2. A personal inward experience of God  
 baptism                      public declaration
3. All who face Godward are incorporated in the Holy.
4. Solidarity with humankind is membership in God’s kingdom

### Ritual and liturgy

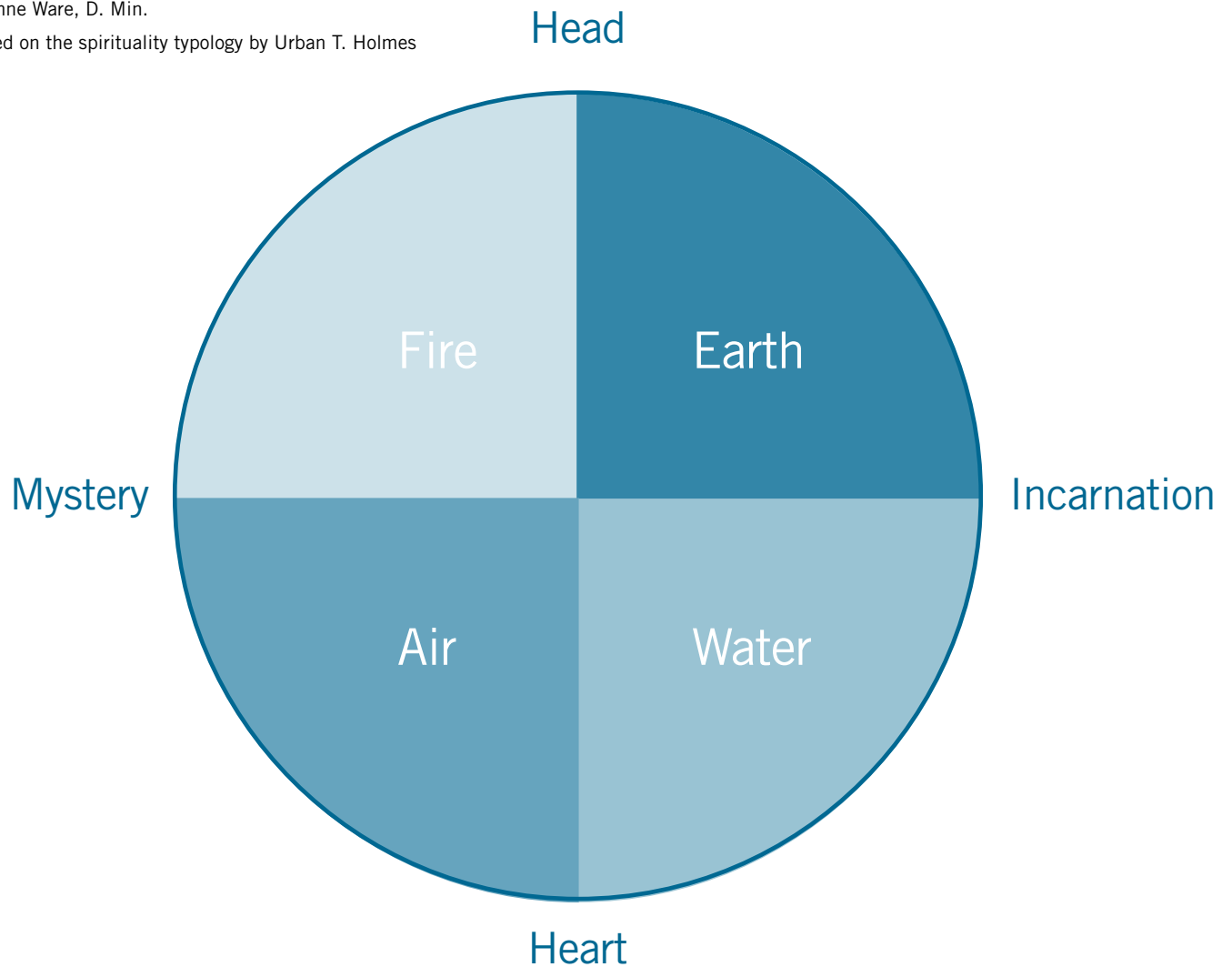
1. Ritual and liturgy evoke memory and presence, teaching traditional truths.
2. Liturgy and ritual ceremonies are not of great importance.
3. Ritual and liturgy are ways in which God becomes present to us.
4. Ritual and liturgy are one way we make statements about inner convictions.

### Concept of God

1. God is revealed in Scripture, sacrament, and in Jesus Christ and his cross.
2. I can feel that God is real and that Christ lives in my heart.
3. God is mystery and can be grasped for but not completely known.
4. Ritual and liturgy are one way we make statements about inner convictions.

# The Spiritual Wheel: A Selector for Spiritual Type Diagram B

Corinne Ware, D. Min.  
Based on the spirituality typology by Urban T. Holmes



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### Group discussion

How many in the group are in:

Earth?            Water?

Air?                Fire?

Were there any surprises?

Notice anything particular about the group?

Are there a majority in one type? Very few in another?

Any other observations?

Notes \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Group experiences

With this foundation of understanding, we open the opportunity to experience the four different paths of spirituality. Each small group will focus on one particular path at a time, experiencing all four paths during this event. Your dominant path will, of course, be most enjoyable and appreciated by you—that’s natural. However, we hope you’ll also appreciate the learning that can take place when you begin to appreciate how others experience God. God speaks in many voices, in many ways. Thank God for that!

# Earth Path

Head – Incarnation

## Dominant characteristics

- a head spirituality/intellectual “thinking” spirituality
- through reading one hears God speak
- written word has power
- a sense of grounding, touching reality
- love of order
- needs activity
- concrete; content is primary
- prayer is word-based; aloud or silent
- outer-directed life

## Worship and theology

- uses *Lutheran Book of Worship*, settings I and II
- centers on the gathering of people and the spoken word
- Scripture is central
- attempts to make sense of spiritual experiences and give them names
- important that things are done “decently and in good order”
- In other words, keeping the doctrine pure. In our case, Earth makes sure what is said and done is “Lutheran.”

## Prayer styles

- spiritual activities include reading, journaling, meditating with a specific focus, Bible study
- word-based, either aloud or silent

## Possibilities for growth

Can you think of any?

## Some like-minded soul mates

Can you think of anyone who fits this description?

## Earth group exploration

### Materials needed for each person:

- Bible
- handout of elemental characteristics

### Introduction

- Look at the characteristics of Earth.
- How many think this is their dominant path?
- How many think they use this path least?

### Read Genesis 16:1–3

There are many directions one could take with this story of Abram, Sarai, and Hagar, including:

- the relationship between God and Abram
- the relationship between Abram and Sarai
- the cultural practice of that time regarding childless couples
- the relationship between Sarai and Hagar
- the relationship among Sarai, Abram, and Hagar
- the relationship between Hagar and God

What is the problem here?

- *Abram and Sarai are still waiting for the children God has promised them, and they are getting older and older.*
- *They decide to take matters into their own hands. Sarai sends her maid, Hagar, to bed with Abram.*
- *Sarai will be the surrogate mother. . . .*
- *. . . . although Hagar would be the biological mother, she had few rights.*
- *Sarai, as Hagar’s owner, would have more rights to the child.*

What does Hagar think about the proposal?

- *Not given a choice; it was the culture at that time.*
- *May have been pleased or not pleased.*
- *We don’t hear her opinion, nor should we expect to; she had no voice in her culture.*

### Read Genesis 16:4–6

- Does Sarai still think it was a good idea? Why or why not?
- Whose side of the story are we hearing?
- What might that tell us?
- Who does Sarai blame?
- Why do you think she blamed him?
- What is Abram’s response?
- And what did Sarai do?

**NOTE:** *There is another version of this story in Genesis 21. In that version, Sarah has Abraham send Hagar and the boy Ishmael away, supplied with bread and water. They run out of supplies, and Hagar lays the boy down under a bush to watch him die.*

### Read Genesis 16:7–9

What’s going on here?

**Read Genesis 16:10–14, 21:13–20**

- What is the promise made to Hagar?
- What kind of a child will Ishmael be?
- Who are his descendants?

**TIP:** *You have a choice here. You can continue to dwell on Hagar’s story, sharing stories of “seeing the face of God,” or you can move on to the next section. Make your choice depending on what is of greatest interest to the participants.*

- What unique happenings take place in verse 13?
- Have you ever “seen the face of God”?

**Look back to Genesis 13:16 and Genesis 15:5**

- How does the promise made to Hagar compare to the promise made to Abram?
- How might this affect how the descendants of Abram looked upon this side of the family?
- How have Christians traditionally looked upon those of the Islamic faith?
- What *could* this mean for how we look on those of the Islamic faith?

**Does the Bible hinder or help you in your understanding of the present-day situation of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim conflict?**

Is there any other information you would find helpful to aid in this understanding?

**DISCUSSION IDEA:** *Consider that the Bible is not here as the “ultimate book of answers,” but a book of experiences that can translate into today’s world.*

**Notes**

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# Water Path

## Incarnation – Heart

### Predominant characteristics

- spirituality is heartfelt
- transformation is often obvious, sudden
- experiences God in the moment, in the present
- experiences highs and lows in religious feeling
- uses intuition to seek God
- focus is personal growth and renewal
- extemporaneous prayer
- being in God's presence
- accepts own God-given spiritual strengths as well as others' strengths

### Worship and theology

- evangelism is important; Water wants to share personal experiences
- personal transformation is also very important
- God is a real presence rather than mysterious or distant
- music is very important in worship; witnessing and testimonials may also be appreciated
- focus is a close walk with God

- it's important to establish relationships, with other people and with God

### Prayer styles

- uses words, like the Earth path, but prayer is more likely to be extemporaneous, open to the moment, and not written out beforehand
- personal service to others is important and can include the need to witness to one's faith while serving
- prayer and worship produces a warm feeling, energy, a freedom of expression
- through free worship, music, artwork, or dance, Water enjoys being in the presence of God

### Possibilities for growth

Can you think of any?

### Some like-minded soul mates

Can you think of anyone who fits this description?

## Water group exploration

### Materials needed:

Collection of art materials including:

- sketch paper
- construction paper
- markers
- water colors
- paint brushes
- glitter
- water
- tissue paper
- glue
- CD player and soft music
- Several candles

### Introduction

- During the time experiencing Water spirituality, you will do a guided meditation. After the meditation and some quiet time, you will create poetry, song, or art, and then share.
- Use the words of the meditation as a pathway to get your bodies involved in the meditation. If you believe you are not artistic, please give it a try anyway. You may surprise yourself!
- After hearing the meditation, ponder what you have experienced; then enjoy expressing yourself.
- What you create can be a picture of what you saw as you listened or a more abstract image of what you felt. Perhaps you will be moved to write about the feelings or emotions you experienced during the meditation. Expressions will vary and all are welcome.
- If you get distracted during the meditation, mentally or physically wave the distractions away and come back to the story. You may wish to close your eyes or find something in the room to focus on, like a candle or a plant, and listen while the meditation is read.
- As we begin the meditation, we will take a few deep, calming breaths.

**NOTE:** *Meditation should be read slowly, with some pauses.*

### The meditation

*Mark 14:3–9: The Anointing at Bethany*

You are walking down a street in the village of Bethany.

The streets are sandy, but packed down from all the traffic.

You look around and see a number of houses and shops.

Some of them have planted trees or bushes in front; some have flowers in the windows.

It is early evening, warm, a few people are outside.

The doors of the houses are open.

Inside some of the houses, people are enjoying their evening meal.

You smell fresh bread.

You see women pouring wine into goblets.

You are looking for one special house, and you find it.  
You stand for a moment looking to see who is at the table.

Ah, there he is.

You have been looking for Jesus, and now you have found him.

You look in your hand. Yes, the little jar is still there!  
It was a gift from a dear friend, and now you're going to give it away.

You walk into the room and look at each person who is there.

You recognize some of them. Most of them are strangers to you.

You walk around the table and pause behind Jesus.

You stand there, listening to his conversation with the others at the table.

Finally, decision made, you open the jar.

The fragrance of strong perfume fills the air.

It's nard, an ointment used for anointing the dead, and very costly.

You place your hand on Jesus' head and run your fingers through his hair.

His hair is dry and dusty from days of travel in the sun.

You pour the nard out onto Jesus' head, massaging it into his scalp, pulling it through his hair. You continue massaging the nard into his hair; you are filled with many emotions.

You look around the room. All the faces are looking at you.

Some nod and smile at you.

Other faces grow dark with anger.

"Why are you wasting this expensive perfume?" someone shouts. "It could have been sold and the money used to feed the poor."

You gasp, and step back, uncertain if you should continue or flee.

But Jesus puts a hand on your arm and reassures you.

He nods at you, and you stay where you are, still fingers in his hair.

"Let her alone," he says. "She has given me a precious gift. She has anointed me for burial, before my death. You will always have the poor with you, but I won't always be here. Truly I tell you, she will be remembered forever for what she has done here this evening."

He turns and smiles at you.

You stay a little longer, then quietly leave.

You go back out into the street, and walk home.

You enter your own home and sit and ponder what he meant.

After a time, you arise, and begin to prepare your own dinner.

*Pause for a moment as you take one more deep breath, signaling the end.*

*Now ask participants to take whatever materials they wish to use and create a picture, poem, or story from the meditation. You may wish to set a time limit.*

*Then open the floor for sharing and discussion.*

Notes

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# Air Path

## Heart – Mystery

### Predominant characteristics

- Mystical spirituality, “being”
- silence, contemplative; attends fully to the inner voice
- introspective, inner reflection
- receptive, yet intuitive
- on a quest; it is the journey that matters
- seeks mystical experiences
- sometimes needs permission to retreat and seek quiet and solitude
- hears God, always listening

### Worship and theology

- God is vast and unknowable, yet strangely accessible; the concept that Christ lives in us has real meaning
- God may be viewed as a creative force, as Spirit
- may not have great appreciation for corporate worship
- meditative/contemplative practices and disciplines of Eastern religions may have strong appeal

- challenges us to imagine what we might experience if we were to be open to trying a different prayer path or a different way of seeing God

### Prayer styles

- some form of quiet time alone with God
- may be guided by a bell, chant, or repeated prayer
- candles, incense, or sweet grass may enhance experience
- silent retreats, nature walks, and sitting with candles and artwork are helpful
- prayer doesn't need words to be prayer

### Possibilities for growth

Can you think of any?

### Some like-minded soul mates

Can you think of anyone who fits this description?

## Air group exploration

*Though some writers represent anything “quiet and away from” as meditation, contemplation and meditation are quite different. The two words should not be used interchangeably.*

*Meditation, with its natural inspiration for creativity such as art, music, writing, and dance, is more appropriately associated with the Water path.*

*Contemplation or centering prayer, lectio divina, and silence are the Air path.*

### Materials needed:

- candles, preferably unscented
- an “away place,” a location that works for you to be still and with God
- breath prayers on easel paper for posting (see Introduction for examples)
- CD player with soft music

### Introduction

- This path of spiritual expression in prayer and worship was very popular among early Christians. It was probably begun in the early fourth century with the Desert Fathers and Mothers.
- Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard von Bingen—all had Air as their primary spiritual path. These names may not well known to most people, and certainly not to many Lutherans. However . . .
- The contemplative tradition has continued through various Christian denominations, most notably through some of the monastic orders of the Roman Catholic Church. Today we can read Thomas Keating’s *Open Mind, Open Heart*; Anthony deMello’s *Sadhana, A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*; and Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina*.
- The idea that **words** are inadequate to describe God and to be avoided as much as possible is rooted well before Jesus and the Judeo-Christian tradition.
- Prayer is a gift. It is more genuinely made when it is received rather than made.
- The focus is *to listen, to simply be!* “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:1
- It is important to distinguish between meditation and contemplation. Thelma Hall describes **meditation** as “a discursive reasoning process in which words, events, etc. are prayerfully pondered and reflected on with the object of drawing from them personal meaning or moral. It is basically an activity of the intellect and reason, aided by grace.”
- She defines **contemplation** as “resting” in God, or a “loving gaze” upon God, or “rapt attention” to God. It is the opening of our mind and heart, our whole being, to God, to be present and to receive.
- With its beginnings in the sixth century, *lectio divina* fell into disuse at the end of the Middle Ages, when forms of “mental prayer” were being taught. It is prayer that begins in reading of Scripture followed by entry into contemplation.
- There are several elements that are useful for contemplation.
- A **time and place** need to be made as routine as possible. Daily practice is recommended, in an established place that is set apart for contemplation.
- **Posture** needs to be comfortable but attentive, on the floor or in a chair with a tall back, for good breathing.
- **Breath awareness**, an awareness that as you breathe, the air you take in is God; you are breathing God in and out.

- Choose a **sacred word** of one or two syllables, like Jesus, Lord, light, love, Abba. Thomas Keating describes the sacred word as a “mental pointer that directs your intention toward God, a symbol of your consent to God’s presence and action within.” When you become aware of thoughts, return to the sacred word.

Begin with an exercise in experiencing silence from Anthony deMello’s *Exercise 1: The Riches of Silence*: “I am going to invite you to keep silence for a period of 10 minutes. First, you will try to attain silence, as total a silence as possible of heart and mind. Having attained it, you will expose yourself to whatever revelation it brings. After the 10 minutes I will invite you to open your eyes and share with us, if you wish, what you experienced in the 10 minutes.”

- Take a comfortable posture.
- Close your eyes. Take two calming breaths. You may use a breath prayer, such as:
  - “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”
  - “I am listening. You are here”
  - “Your Power moves through me”
- Quiet yourself within and without.
- Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within you.
- As your mind begins to go to thoughts, gently return to your sacred word.

**Discussion and questions following silent, contemplative prayer:**

- What attempts did you make to attain silence?
- Describe the silence if you can.
- What did you experience in the silence?
- Tell anything that you thought and felt during this exercise.
- Most of us discover that silence is something we are simply not accustomed to. Even if we are perfectly still and quiet, our minds are full of wandering thoughts and our hearts with emotional turmoil. Don’t be discouraged. Even our wandering thoughts are a revelation to us, are they not? To be aware of the type of wandering that our mind does is good experience for us. Being aware of our inner turmoil and of our inability to be still reveals to us that we have some degree of silence within us.
- Some women who have had experience with meditation may ask how this differs from transcendental meditation or yoga meditation. We do all of this in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Other methods hold up self as all-powerful, without sin and perfect, implying that we can be God. God’s Spirit lives within us, for sure, but God does the saving, sanctifying work within us. We do not do it ourselves.

*Allow 10 minutes of prayer.*

**Notes**

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## Fire Path (smallest of the four groups)

### Mystery – Head

#### Predominant characteristics

- head spirituality
- single-minded, focused
- active visionaries, sometimes crusaders, maybe even martyrs
- impatient with those who do not share the vision
- can become heroic leaders and agents for change
- challenge us and don't care about how others judge them
- intellectually active
- enjoy reading books or hearing speakers who stimulate their thought processes

#### Worship and theology

- hold a sturdy idealism that takes responsibility for change
- affiliation with a particular faith group may not be necessary
- aim is to obey God and witness to God's coming reign
- may need to belong to small groups where they can be heard
- find full expression in organizations like Habitat for Humanity, political groups, or the local "walk for hunger" committee
- often need alternative worship styles to what is typically offered

#### Prayer styles

- often expressed in or with action, expecting that action will impact the world in some way
- may say, "My work and my prayer are one" or "I pray with my hands and my feet."
- has the ability to pray while working

#### Carried to the extreme

- can develop tunnel vision that is moralistic and unrelenting
- can resent any who are not energetically supporting the cause
- can end up not noticing people who are less single-minded
- a tendency to neglect the inner person, not taking time for reflection
- can become disillusioned if and when action does not have the impact hoped for
- can hurt others' feelings
- may become highly judgmental
- potential to be disruptive to the congregation

#### Possibilities for growth

Can you think of any?

#### Some like-minded soul mates

Do you know anyone who fits this description?

## Fire group exploration

### Materials needed:

- newsprint
- markers
- masking tape
- sticky notes

### Introduction

- Fire most often is about action. This is ministry by working with one’s hands, through advocacy, or through fund raising.
- Getting to the solution of the problem is important for Fire, as is thinking through a situation in as many ways as possible and listening to as many voices as possible before coming to a solution or resolving the situation.
- In this spirituality path experience, we’ll look at two hypothetical situations and see what the possibilities are for resolution.

*Write “Volunteer Wall” on a sheet of newsprint and post it to the wall.*

*Read through the two situations below and then read the situation questions.*

### The situations

1. Your sixth-grade daughter just told you that her best friend, Sarah, has begun using drugs. She says Sarah offered to give her some. She doesn’t want to betray her friend, but she knows she doesn’t want to be involved in drug use. How do you deal with drug use among children?
2. Rachel, a 15-year-old member of your congregation, is pregnant. How do you react? How do you want your own daughter to see this situation? Is there something you can do about teen pregnancy?

### Situation questions:

*What are the surface issues?*

*What is the context?*

*What might be some of the issues behind the information we have been given?*

*Do we have enough information to form a solution to the situation?*

*How do we decide what our own role is in these situations?*

Ask each other which questions you found easiest to respond to as you were seeking a “solution” to the situation.

**When you are looking for a solution to a problem, is it easy to take the added time to dig below the surface issue?**

**We all have gifts, God-given spiritual gifts, and this is not the time to hide them under a barrel. Let us know how you share your talents and gifts by helping others. Discuss your volunteer experiences by writing them on the newsprint labeled “volunteer wall.”**





## Spiritual Walk

What do the circle, its segments, and those words on the inventory and wheel have to do with spirituality and with you?

Corinne Ware’s definition of spirituality is “those attitudes and activities that characterize one’s attempt to make connection with God.” Spirituality is how we connect with God, how we hear God. As individuals, we have learned different tools for hearing God, such as witnessing, Bible study, worship, and prayer.

There are two words that are very helpful in understanding spirituality in two different dimensions: **integration** and **individuation**.

**Integration**, who we are together, is represented by the circle.

**Individuation**, who we are individually, is represented by the quadrants.

- Being a part of a spiritual community and becoming one’s individual self are both necessary to a healthy and growing spirituality.
- Healthy spirituality is integration of past and present. Corinne Ware writes, “personal wholeness includes an understanding and acceptance of one’s past.”
- Keep in mind that nothing, including spirituality, exists in a vacuum. All of who we are, including our spiritual selves, is influenced by our culture, our family, our history.
- It is important to tell our faith story to others. You will find your voice in your story, your own unique self and spiritual expression.
- Our calling is somewhere in our faith story. What is it that God has given you to tell the world?
- This integration of our past offers up individuation to us, the becoming of who we are.
- In order to tell your faith story, you need to relate to others.
- *That* is the spiritual walk.

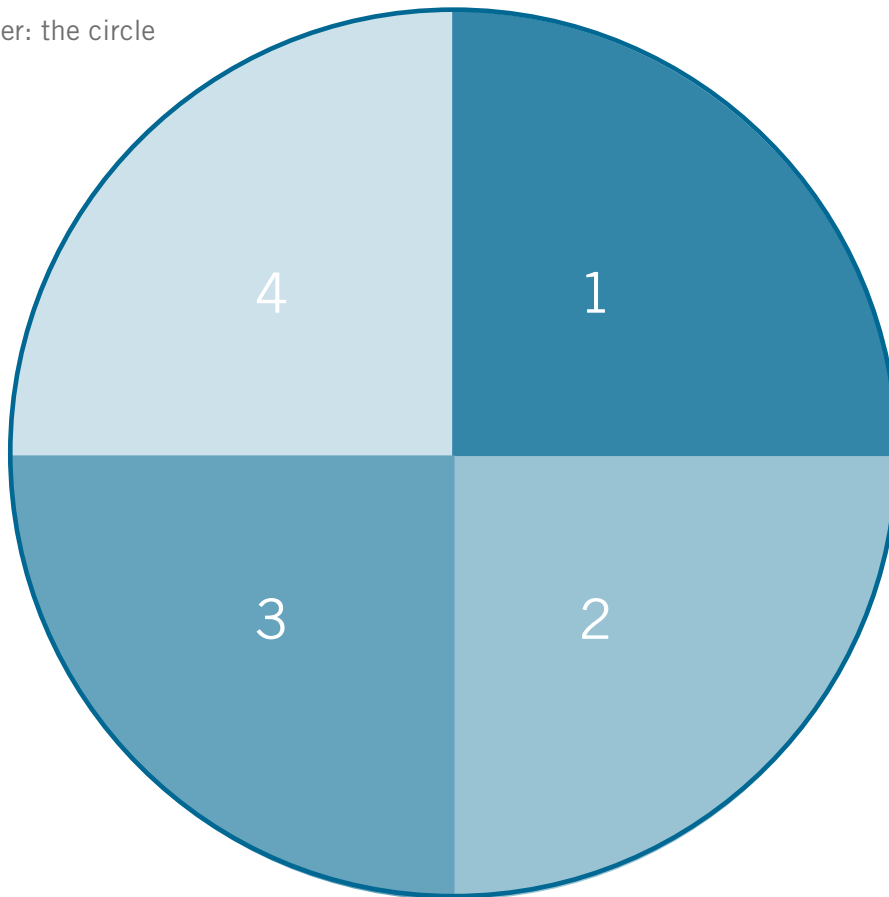
## Our Spiritual Walk Diagram

### Individuation

Who we are individually: the quadrants

### Integration

Who we are together: the circle



## Jesus' Spirituality: A Model of Wholeness

This exercise is important because Jesus is our model of wholeness. This fifth exercise helps us see our model, Jesus, as whole, through a variety of Bible passages.

You will break out into groups of three or four, with each group responding to and discussing three or four passages.

- Historically, the Christian church has looked to Christ as a model of spirituality: The imitation of Christ, *imitatio Christi*, is the patterning of one's life after what we know of the life of Jesus. Jesus is the prime example of the God-connected life.
- If Jesus' life is illustrative of the ways in which human beings at their fullest spiritual capacity can relate to God, then what characteristics can be observed?
- What makes his a full spirituality?
- Take some time to look at Scripture passages that may offer illustrations in Jesus' life of the four paths we've discussed.

But first, what do we know about the context in which Jesus lived?

|                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>patriarchal society</i> | <i>rigid class structure</i> |
| <i>status of women</i>     | <i>arranged marriages</i>    |
| <i>pharisaic theology</i>  | <i>prophetic tradition</i>   |

- As we look through these passages, what do we see of his cultural tradition and religious heritage? What has he incorporated into his life from the context in which he lives?
- Now there is much discussion and speculation—because it is impossible for us to know for sure—as to when and how Jesus came to fully understand his innate capabilities in light of his divinity. But we see a few examples of it.
- We also see that who he was as a person led him to understand and interpret to others the common heritage he shared with them.

### Passages

Matthew 3:13–17

*Jesus' baptism; starting point as we know it*

Luke 2:41–49

*Synagogue at 12; knowing who he was*

Luke 4:16–21

*Reading from scroll; fulfillment of prophecy*

Luke 13:10–13ff

*taught in synagogue and healed bent woman*

Luke 6:1–11

*Healing on the Sabbath*

Matthew 9:10–13

*Eating with tax collectors and sinners*

Matthew 21:12–13

*Purpose of the Temple*

Luke 22:39–46

*Praying in Gethsemane*

Matthew 4: 1–11

*Temptation in the wilderness*

Matthew 6:5–6

*Praying in private*

Matthew 14:23

*Away by himself in prayer after feeding the crowds*

Matthew 15:22–24

*Canaanite woman*

Matthew 10:1

*Calling the Twelve*

## Our learnings

What have we learned from what we know of Jesus' spirituality, from these passages as well as any other passages you could list?

**With Jesus as our model, then, let's take a look together and individually at the following questions:**

- What is the context in which we live, collectively (globally) and individually?
- How have we taken in what has been our history, our heritage?
- What choices have we made, where our history and heritage are concerned?
- How have our history and heritage affected our spirituality?
- How does it help us to know that Jesus was a product of his environment and still made conscious choices to "walk his and God's walk, and talk his and God's talk?"
- What conscious choices will you make as you live your life as a unique woman of God?

## Call for Commitment

An important point to remember:

Spiritual discipline is about practice, not perfection. Whatever path we're on, however we choose to live out our spirituality, we're practicing to become more like Jesus.

How can we express our own spiritual styles when we go home?

- How do you spend time with God?
- What kind of conversations do you and God have?
- Are there new ways you might try in the future? What are they?
- Are there activities you could do that express your spirituality?

### **Time with God and time with God's people are connected**

Time with God strengthens us to encounter all of God's people, who may or may not know God. Likewise, time with God's people reminds us of God's love for us and for all God's people. The two nourish one another. This sends us back to God again in gratitude for God's goodness.

## Sample Closing Devotion

Adorn the worship space with candles, flowers, and any symbols developed throughout the event that would be appropriate.

**Gathering** *Gather Us In (ELW 532)*

### Call to Worship

**L:** Rejoice in the Lord always. Say it again:  
Rejoice! Let gentleness be evident to all, for the Lord is near.

**P:** **Let us not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present our requests to God.**

**L:** Rejoice in the Lord always. Say it again:  
Rejoice!

**P:** **Let gentleness be evident to all, for the Lord is near.**

### Confession and Forgiveness

**L:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**P:** **Amen.**

**L:** The Son of righteousness shall rise with shining beams of healing. Let us gather under the wings of God's mercy.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination*

**Hymn** *Jesus, Remember Me*

**L:** Gracious God,

**P:** **We acknowledge that we are sinners and we confess our sins, those known to us that burden our hearts and those unknown to us but seen by you. We know that before you nothing remains hidden, and in you everything is revealed. Free us from the slavery of sin; liberate us from the bondage of guilt; work in us work that is pleasing in your sight; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**L:** From the house of David, God raised up a mighty Savior.

**P:** **Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who comes to set us free.**

**L:** Remembering the covenant, God delivered us from our enemies.

**P:** **Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who comes to set us free.**

**L:** Before God we are holy and righteous, free to worship without fear.

**P:** **Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who comes to set us free.**

**L:** With a heart full of mercy and compassion, God saves us and forgives us all our sins. Christ, the dawn from on high, shines upon us, and the light of the Holy Spirit guides our feet into the way of peace.

**P:** **Amen.**

**Hymn** *Oh, Sing to the Lord (Cantad al Señor) (ELW 822)*

### Prayer of the Day

**L:** Let us pray.  
Creator God, you have blessed us with marvelous gifts and with a desire to spend time in your presence. Enable us to serve you with joy and seek you as we walk along the pathways of our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Word:** Exodus 31:1–5

The LORD spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft,

to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.

### Psalm 139:1–18

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.  
 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
     you discern my thoughts from far away.  
 You search out my path and my lying down,  
     and are acquainted with all my ways.  
 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
     O LORD, you know it completely.  
 You hem me in, behind and before,  
     and lay your hand upon me.  
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
     it is so high that I cannot attain it.  
 Where can I go from your spirit?  
     Or where can I flee from your presence?  
 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
     if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
 If I take the wings of the morning  
     and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
 even there your hand shall lead me,  
     and your right hand shall hold me fast.  
 If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
     and the light around me become night,”  
 even the darkness is not dark to you;  
     the night is as bright as the day,  
     for darkness is as light to you.  
 For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
     you knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
     Wonderful are your works;  
 that I know very well.  
     My frame was not hidden from you,  
 when I was being made in secret,  
     intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.  
 In your book were written  
     all the days that were formed for me,  
     when none of them as yet existed.  
 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!  
     How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand;  
     I come to the end—I am still with you.

**Hymn** *Canticle of the Turning* (ELW 723)

### Gospel: John 14:25–31

I have said these things to you while I am still with you.  
 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father  
 will send in my name, will teach you everything, and  
 remind you of all that I have said to you.  
 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do  
 not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your  
 hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.  
 You heard me say to you, “I am going away, and I am  
 coming to you.” If you loved me, you would rejoice  
 that I am going to the Father, because the Father is  
 greater than I.  
 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so  
 that when it does occur, you may believe. I will no  
 longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world  
 is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the  
 Father has commanded me, so that the world may  
 know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

**Hymn** *Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying*  
 (ELW 752)

### Prayers

#### The Peace

**L:** The peace of the Lord be with us always.  
**P:** **And also with you.**

#### Commitment Offering

If you made a commitment to yourself to live out  
 your spirituality in a particular way, and you wrote it  
 on a piece of paper, I invite you to come forward and  
 place that commitment in this basket.  
**P:** **God of wonder, we offer ourselves and our  
 commitments along with these humble gifts,  
 praising you for your goodness and mercy.  
 Receive this offering with our gratitude.**

## Benediction

**P:** May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, in Jesus Christ our Lord. May the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always.

**Closing hymn** *Lead Me, Guide Me* (ELW 768)

## Sample Evaluation Form


1. I believe the information about different paths was well communicated.



well communicated not at all

I especially appreciated:

2. I believe the information about spiritual paths can be used in my daily life.



very usable not at all

Please share at least one way you can use this information:

3. My dominant path(s) is (are):

What might that mean as you respond to your church service, hymns, prayer, the church's involvement in politics, etc.?

4. How will you use the insights gained from this retreat in your daily life?

5. My most significant insight from the Paths to Wholeness retreat was:

A safe and blessed journey as you continue on your spiritual path!