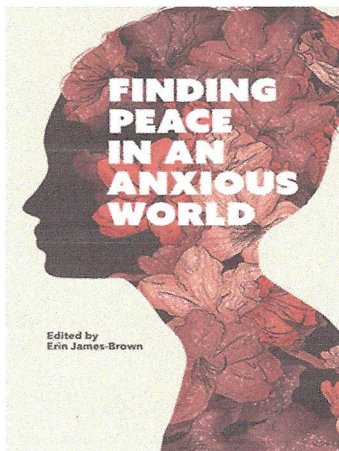


SESSION 4: WISDOM

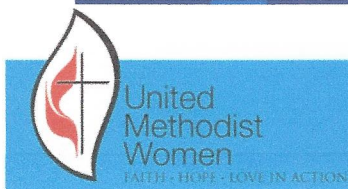


"Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 133
 Credit: "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms." Music by Anthony J. Showalter, 1887. Words by Elisha A. Hoffman, 1887. Public domain.
 Musician: Catherine Ritch

1

The Serenity Prayer

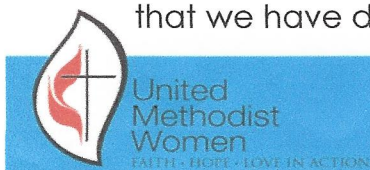
*God, grant me the Serenity
 To Accept the things I cannot change...
 Courage to change the things I can,
 And Wisdom to know the difference.*



2

Session 4: *WISDOM*

- Explore what it means to seek after the wisdom of God
- Examine what elements go into wise living
- Experience the spiritual practice of trustful wayfinding through a labyrinth walk
- Review the various practices for alleviating anxiety that we have discussed throughout the study



3

SESSION 4: WISDOM Gathering and Opening Ritual

Body Prayer

Begin by standing or sitting in a comfortable position, with feet about shoulder width apart, and hands at your sides.

Holy God, you call us to lives of courage and wisdom, not lives of anxiety.

Raise both arms above your head.

We raise our hands high, because you ask us to work with willing hands.

Stretch you hands out in front of you, palms up.

We stretch our hands in front of us, because you call us to reach out to those in need.

Bring your hands to your brow, above your eyes, as if searching the distance.

We bring our hands to our brow, that we may face the future without fear.

Slowly bring your hands to your chest, pressed together in the traditional prayer pose.

We move to a posture of centering prayer, because we ask for your wisdom.

Amen.

(Text inspired by Proverbs 31)



4

REFLECTION on BODY PRAYER

Spend a few a minutes thinking about what you just did.

Anxiety and wisdom, as well as other qualities that we have discussed, often manifest in the body.

What do they feel like?

What does it feel like to embody prayer, rather than anxiety?



5

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

1. What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

What a blessedness, what a peace is mine
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Chorus:

Leaning, leaning,
safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

2. O how sweet to walk, in this pilgrim
way,

leaning on the everlasting arms.

O how bright the path grows from day to
day.

Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Chorus:

Leaning, leaning,
safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

3. What have I to dread, what have I to
fear,

leaning on the everlasting arms.

I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Chorus:

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6

PB9

Möbius Strip Movement: Back-and-forth reading act

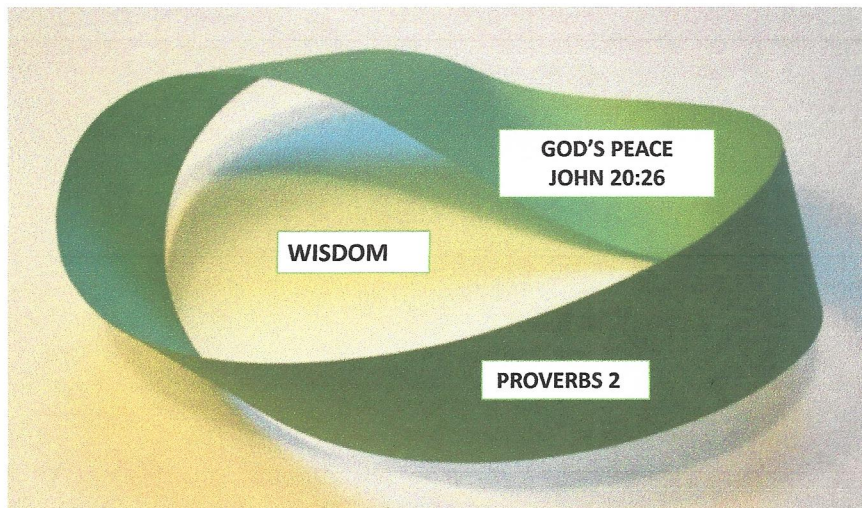


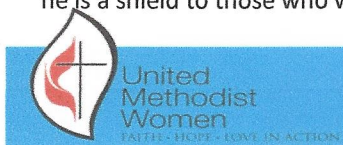
Image: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Möbius_strip.jpg; Content: Glory Dharmaraj

7

PROVERBS 2:1-11

My child, if you accept my words
 and treasure up my commandments within you,
² making your ear attentive to wisdom
 and inclining your heart to understanding;
³ if you indeed cry out for insight,
 and raise your voice for understanding;
⁴ if you seek it like silver,
 and search for it as for hidden treasures—
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD
 and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom;
 from his mouth come knowledge and
 understanding;
⁷ he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
 he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly,

⁸ guarding the paths of justice
 and preserving the way of his faithful ones.
⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and
 justice
 and equity, every good path;
⁸ guarding the paths of justice
 and preserving the way of his faithful ones.
⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and
 justice
 and equity, every good path;
¹⁰ for wisdom will come into your heart,
 and knowledge will be pleasant to your
 soul;
¹¹ prudence will watch over you;
 and understanding will guard you.



8

What is Wisdom?

- It is not simply gathering information: "...while knowledge and wisdom are close cousins, they are not one and the same. Knowledge—even knowledge about ourselves—is information, at its base level.... Knowledge, intelligence, and logic are important, but there is still something missing that keeps it from passing into the realm of wisdom: morals and compassion. As followers of Jesus, we call this Christian wisdom." (Text, p. 73)

Quiet reflection: When have you sought, or helped someone seek, Christian wisdom? What was that process like?



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9

Wisdom and the Christian Life

- "Wisdom exists in a four-fold tension." (Text, p. 78)
 - 1) Christians work for wisdom, but it is God who grants wisdom.
 - 2) Christians build a tolerance for disappointment but maintain determined hope.
 - 3) Wisdom is a practice in which we participate, but it is a gift granted by God.
 - 4) Wisdom does not do away with anxiety but provides tools to manage anxiety.
- Consider these alongside Proverbs 2:1-11. Do you agree with these statements? What does each say about wise living?



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Discuss your answers in your breakout groups for about 10 minutes.

10

DETERMINED HOPE

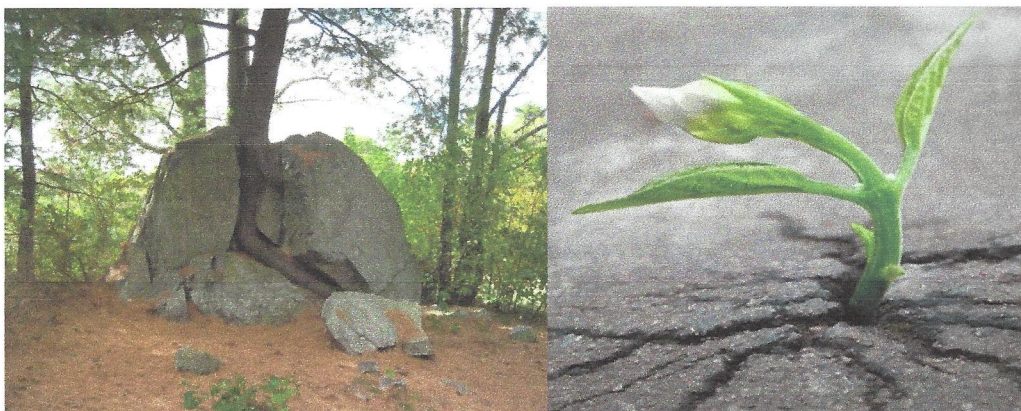


Image: Glory Dharmaraj

Image: drsaradennis.com



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11

Spiritual Practice: Labyrinth Meditation

- Wayfinding: information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their experience and understanding of the space.
 - ❖ **Christian wayfinding:** As Christians, our way is found through Jesus Christ—sometimes easily, sometimes not—but is always supposed to be a journey of trust.
 - ❖ **Follow Jesus' Gethsemane example:** As Christ did in the Garden, we can trust in a wisdom that is beyond our own, gifted by a God who loves us deeply.



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Labyrinth Meditation (continued)

- Labyrinth: a sacred place to reflect, look inside, pray, and negotiate new behavior. (Text, p. 84) Not a maze or a race, it can be experienced in three stages:
 - Entering:** Walk toward the center, releasing cares and concerns, emptying and quieting ourselves before God.
 - Centering:** As we reach the center, we pray and meditate, seeking clarity for our lives. We can stay as long as we like.
 - Returning:** As we walk out on the same path, we are empowered by the Spirit to be more authentic in ourselves and in our service to the world.



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Spend about 8 minutes “walking” our
finger labyrinth.

13

Session 4: Finger Labyrinth



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14

Session 4: Finger Labyrinth



Reflection

- What was “walking” a labyrinth like for you?
- Have you had an experience like this before?
- What wisdom did you discover about prayer during your labyrinth walk?
- Is this a practice that you may want to experience again?

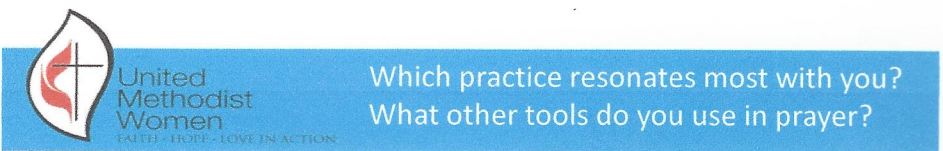


15

PB6

Reflection and Review

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| • Breath Prayer | • Kataphatic Prayer |
| • Examen | • Emotional Freedom Technique/Tapping |
| • Welcoming Prayer | • Body Prayer |
| • Praising in song/Corporate singing | • Labyrinth walking/walking meditation |



16

PB6

Moving to Action

- What action is God calling us to do, here and now, for the transformation of the world?
- What will be your personal “next faithful step” in following God’s call?
- Take a minute or two to consider this call to action and write it down for yourself.



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17

Closing Litany

- One: Sometimes we are anxious, God. We long for your peace.
- **All: God, grant us wisdom.**
- One: God, we ask that we might have the serenity of Jesus when he was in the temple, knowing that he was in his father’s house.
- **All: God, grant us wisdom.**



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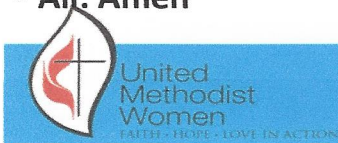
18

- One: God, we know that we must trust in you, even when it is difficult. Let us practice acceptance. And God, we also ask for courage, knowing that we will be called to act.

- **All: God, grant us wisdom**

- One: May we go forth with the power of your Spirit, ready to work for justice; ready to put faith, hope and love into action.

- **All: Amen**



Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

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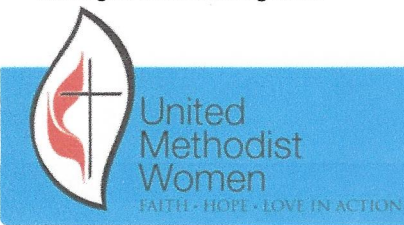
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