

The Blog 6

Weekly Blog on the On-line Group Meeting to Consider- A Rule of Life for Lockdown

**At the Sixth Session (10th June) we reviewed our group time asking what we have valued, how we'd like to proceed in following weeks (ie date and time, study topic, format, leadership etc) and secondly,**

**how we might develop a communal Rule of Life that maps our life together in lockdown.**

It was great to see 17 people online. We were Ian and Sonya Stocker, Nick and Sarah Jarrett-Kerr, Liz Chappell, Frances Urwin, Matt Thomson, Howard Worsley, Kay Friend, Beth Ashton-Hilton, Margaret Hamilton, Jenny and Baz Nottage, Avril Chadwick, Wendy Reakes, Stella Wilson and Margaret Mellor.

**Howard initially welcomed and hosted before Ian led the initial review on..**

- What has been good about our first attempt at an on-line group?
  - Many said how much they valued learning from the Bible, and in particular looking carefully at 1 Thessalonians.
  - Several valued hearing different views and one said it was 'a lifeline'.
  - Others mentioned that having a regular and committed time for the meeting was good.
  - 'Outside members' were also seen as being *valued* (*Note from Howard....we don't actually have 'outsiders'...This is a social construct for those who are geographically located in normal time but does not impact on on-line community*)
  - Interaction and accountability is of the essence.
- How might we do even better?
  - Improve the sound (we are all on a learning curve with social media and virtual platforms, some achieving better sound quality than others. We have so far migrated from LifeSize to Zoom and people are accessing this from pcs, Ipads and Iphones. Keep helping each other.
- How will we include those who can't access this? (or to include others by expanding this?)
  - This item showed huge energy and generated many ideas namely;
    - We must identify who would like to be part of the group but cannot be involved (due to technology, health, aptitude etc)...**THEN**
    - Record the session and pass it on

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- Arrange face to face (park bench/ socially distanced) meetings to pass on our meeting
- New Creation can purchase cheap Ipads to give/ lend to older folk whom we will train to use them.

*(Note from Howard...I suggest the group appoints two group outreach workers. One will make a list of who is excluded from the group and who would like to be a part of the group. The other will connect up the excluded with the included to remedy the matter. Further note, these are relatively small admin jobs that will add to the three current jobs currently in play namely the zoom administrator (Kirsty), the host co-ordinator (me) and the co-host (Ian)...as we progress it is hoped we will share tasks with joy as a community growing together with a rule of life. PS Offer if you have energy and joy to do these tasks.).*

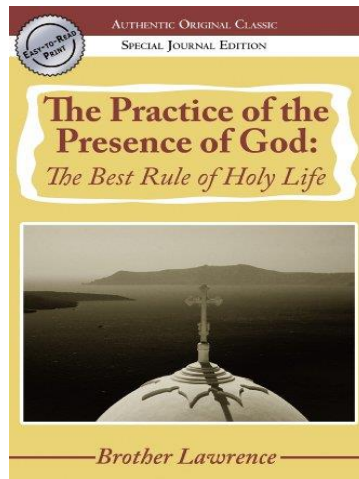
- What material in the Bible might be our future focus?
  - Howard suggest we now dig into the Acts of the Apostles and aim to cover it in large chunks across the summer. This book shows how the gospel began to spread around the Mediterranean in the first century as the gospel moved rapidly from its Jewish roots and took root in Gentile communities. We will reflect on how these early communities grew with such vigour and radical impact.
- Shall we expand our leadership of this group?
  - Howard suggests that we will continue to share out the hosting of Bible studies between lay and clergy and between men and women as we seek to model the early egalitarian Church communities.
- Is there a better night than Wednesday or a better time than 7.30-9.00pm?
  - This seems to be as good a time as any so we'll keep it.

For the second part Howard led a focus on the development of the Rule of Life asking specifically for an insight into the Rule of Life (3-4 minutes each) from four guest contributors;

### 1) Beth Ashton-Hilton

- Beth shared how she has developed since recognising that a rule of life is the natural development of what God is doing (and is not something that can be forced). She has begun to understand Christian life as 'practicing the presence of God' – a phrase derived from Brother Lawrence *(Note from Howard, this book is available on Amazon for about 70pence on kindle or £2.00 soft back)*

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Beth talked about how she was learning to bring all tasks into a conscious prayer awareness eg massaging can become a prayer as can knitting or sewing. She is greatly encouraged in this by the American missionary to the Philippines, Frank Laubach who went with his wife to the Philippine Islands as a missionary in 1915. After founding churches on the island of Mindanao, he established and became dean of Union College in Manila. In 1930 he returned to Mindanao to work with the Mohammedan Moros who regarded the Christian Filipinos as their enemies. Laubach, however, went with a heart filled with the presence of God and sought only to live among them, not trying to coerce them into Christianity, but living each moment with a sense of God's presence.

It is estimated that through his educational efforts he was responsible for teaching one-half of the ninety thousand people in that area to read and write. More than that, he has brought thousands of people to a richer experience of God. The following reading comes from the letters he wrote during his Mindanao days.

**Beth is influenced by his teaching to turn our awareness onto God EVERY minute of EVERY day.**

### 2) Nick and Sarah (insights from Chemin Neuf)

- Nick and Sarah each shared wise and embedded insights from Chemin Neuf, a community that has origins in Roman Catholicism and is now ecumenical. It draws on Ignatian and Charismatic spirituality in teaching about spiritual accompaniment, a commitment to mission and a commitment to spiritual formation (see the teachings of Dallas Willard). This community has had a big impact on how they live.

Attached are two documents that they kindly sent me to circulate;

- appendix 1 Spiritual Formation: What it is, and How it is Done (Dallas Willard) and
- appendix 2 CHEMIN NEUF COMMUNITY (CNC) – RULE OF LIFE

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### 1. **HOW WE CAME ACROSS THEM (SJK)**

- Attended Cana Week 2013 – A Week Of Marriage Enrichment For Couples
- CNC - Rc Community With Ecumenical Vocation
- Led Cana Welcome Programme with New Creation – 8 Evenings Over A Year With A Weekend

### 2. **ABOUT CHEMIN NEUF (NJK)**

- 4 bases in UK including LAMBETH PALACE
- Rooted in IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY & CHARISMATIC RENEWAL
- Levels of membership, consecrated , full-time etc and with an outer level known as “Communion” that is most relevant to New Creation

### 3. **COMMUNION – SEVEN COMMITMENTS** (stressing those commitments in bold)

- PRAYER
- FRATERNAL LIFE – in other words, all to be part of home group
- **SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT (SJK)**
  - Commitment to have A Spiritual Director – We Think All Christians Can Benefit
  - We got one each Via Bath and Wells Diocese and we each meet once every 6 weeks or so
- AUTHORITY
- SHARING FINANCIALLY
- **FORMATION – LEARNING TO BE LIKE CHRIST (NJK)**
  - more than just an introduction to Christianity (like Alpha )
  - commitment to go deeper with process of transformation of our hearts/spirit/wills in such a way that Christ becomes formed in us and in which the personality and deeds of Jesus flow out from us automatically and naturally. through this we can become Christ’s redemptive community – the “city on the hill” and the life-transforming salt & light in a darkened world
  - we have been following a spiritual formation programme (not via CNC but based on teachings of Dallas Willard) and found it very helpful, including delving into the ancient mystics such as St Ignatius, Brother Lawrence, Aelred of Rievaulx, Julian of Norwich, St John of the Cross)
- **REGULAR INVOLVEMENT IN MISSION (SJK)**
  - Commitment to attend one retreat each year (eg one-week spiritual exercises retreat)
  - Commit to help at least one week a year (we have helped on core team for Cana and St Anselm)
  - Commit to also help with cooking, housekeeping etc at an event

### 3) **Wendy Reakes** shared vulnerably about her longing to be a disciplined Christian and then how it dawned upon her that the habit she had gained in lockdown was to listen to music and to sing and worship. She inspired us with her joy quoting Psalm 95

<sup>1</sup> Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;

let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

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<sup>2</sup> Let us come before him with thanksgiving  
and extol him with music and song.

- 4) **Matt Thomson** shared insights from his Franciscan Rule of Life that has been part of him for thirty years. He referred to the nine sections of the rule of life detailing that it allowed him to be 'more me'- that person made in the image of God. The Franciscan way deliberately encourages **body** (exercise and eating and hobbies) as well as **spirit** (Bible and prayer and eucharist) and **mind** (reading, study and retreat).

This is detailed below;

- ▣ 1 The Holy Eucharist (weekly habit)
- ▣ 2 Penitence (review annually)
- ▣ 3 Personal Prayer (daily habit)
- ▣ 4 Self Denial (termly review)
- ▣ 5 Retreat (annual habit)
- ▣ 6 Study (weekly habit)
- ▣ 7 Simplicity (review annually)
- ▣ 8 Work and Mission (review annually)
- ▣ 9 Obedience (review annually)
- ▣ 10 Spiritual Direction (termly meeting)

(Also consider balance of leisure, sleep, time off, holidays etc as well as work, study and prayer etc)

Next week (17<sup>th</sup> June) we will consider how these habits connect with us all as **patterns of Godly living we are making habitual on a:**

- Daily basis
- Weekly basis
- Monthly/ termly basis and an
- Annual basis

Are there habits that are seasonal?

Are there habits that connect us so that we can have overlap and thereby share a communal rule of life?

Next Week, 17<sup>th</sup> June we'll meet again at

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81764868391>**

**Meeting ID: 817 6486 8391**

**The format will be the same as before....**

- 1) Check in (saying 'Hi' and catch up generally and reflecting on previous week 10 June) hosted by HW**
- 2) Flight Time (Sharing insights about the rule of life (good habits for godly living), and looking at Acts 1 and 2), led by HW (shared out following week...I attach a few pages from RP Martin's commentary to those who have time to read ahead.)**
- 3) Check Out (prayer)**

**Stay in peace**

**Howard**