

Friday 26th

Do you know how to bless yourself? After our early session of Lectio Divina Sigríður's bodywork showed us how to bless the various parts of our bodies and sense the energy emanating from our hands. Exercises for the brain, the eyes, the shoulders and the knees opened up new experiences.

Today's theme was gratitude for the gifts of God in the present. Such gifts can also be other people. So Morning Prayer focused on the Letter to Philemon as an example of Paul's gratitude for the companionship of the runaway slave Onesimus and his plea to Philemon to release Onesimus from his bondage so that Paul could retain him as a companion, not to mention Philemon's gratitude to Paul for his conversion and Onesimus' gratitude for having found a champion. Gratitude can help a person flourish and in his letter to the church at Ephesus around the end of the century Ignatius of Antioch greets the bishop who happens to be called Onesimus. Same person? We spent some time in gratitude for the persons closest to ourselves. Do we sometimes take them for granted?

Today was a day for workshops and there was a host to choose from:

- Una on Poetry, Spirituality and Prayer;
- Natalie on Practising Gratitude through the Examen;
- Sigríður on St. Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) designated one of Europe's six patron saints by the Pope in 1999;
- Peder Bergqvist from Berget Christian Community on The Spirituality of Wilfrid Stinissen;
- Vigfús on the Connection between Natural Church Building and Spiritual Direction, among other things through the Enneagram;
- Liz on the Use of Scripture in Spiritual Direction;
- Teemu on the Spirituality of Martin Lönnebo.
- Marika on Growing Younger

This writer was, alas, able to attend only two.

Una told us about the transformative reading of poetry, a right brain activity, the art of slow reading opening up contemplative space, tasting, savouring, leading maybe to an "Aha" moment, moving us into a realm of mystery, a wisdom space. Several poems selected by her served as illustrations, and to conclude Stiiv was persuaded to read one of his own poems.

With Liz we explored what the Bible has meant to us and still means to us (not necessarily the same!) and how we use it. We touched on the issue of those who have been damaged by a misuse of scripture, and Jesus as a spiritual director.

All these exemplify the strength of our SDE gatherings which can result in so many precious moments of deep sharing.

The same theme continued in the afternoon as Lehel introduced a session of sharing about what we can be grateful for in the present within SDE. New members, the return of some who have been absent for a while, a peaceful place, fresh air, friendships, love, kindness, being received as you are, time for things to be pondered and weighed, wisdom, conversations, workshops, listening, volunteer work, being in a European context, hospitality of the house and the food. These and many more aspects foster a spirit of humility and wonder.

Rättvik church is one of the oldest in Sweden, situated on the shores of Lake Siljan which was formed within the crater of a meteorite collision some 377 million years ago. Our pilgrimage there provided an opportunity for well-needed exercise and fresh air, plus it invited us to pause at intervals for prayers and scripture readings. The church itself was a haven of peace for guided mediation led by Fabio, private silent meditation, and the contemplation of a numbers of works of art. Stiiv presided at our concluding eucharist during which we blessed the waters of the lake and allowed the waters to bless us. Water, the source of life, refreshment and renewal, living water.

And so we returned for our supper and following that our transition into silence.