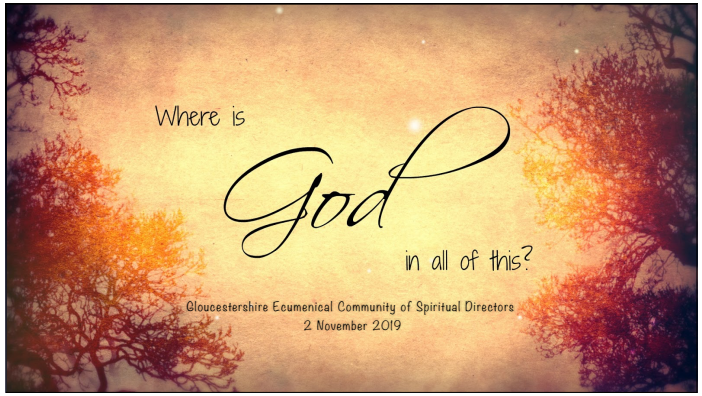


Agreements

Respect

Confidentiality

Participate – stretch zone

Restraint

Turn off ringers and beepers

Enjoy

Aims of the day

Thinking about God

Back to SD basics: what are we about?

Courage of presence / holding the space

Courage to bring God present

Questions we could ask

Living in troubling times

Feeling frightened and lost

Crisis

> *"Political language becomes increasingly dominated by the marketing of slogans, sound bites, and the calculation of short-term advantage, in a way that effectively removes politics from considerations about the transformation of human culture."*
> (Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons*, p. 9)

Living in troubling times (cont)

Loss of 'story' / 'icons' / meaning and purpose

> *"When a person can't find a deep sense of meaning, they distract themselves with pleasure."* (Victor Frankl)

Spiritual direction as the space of uncertainty

Exhortation

Proposal

God is here, always present to those who attend

We serve our directees best when we

- bring ourselves as present to God as we can (free of anxious self-concern)
- help them to bring themselves as present to God as they can

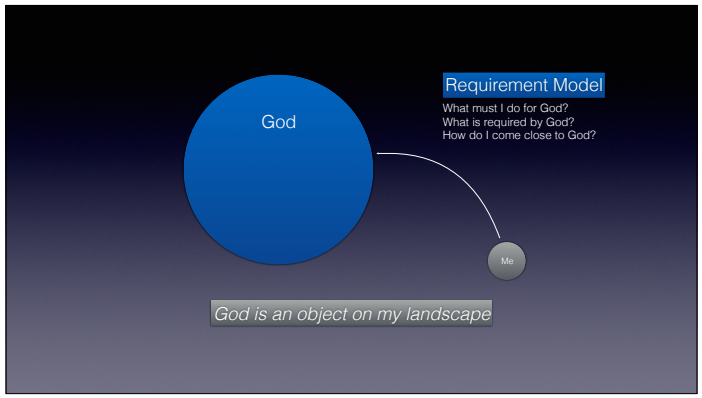
Proposal (cont)

The primary place to do this is in the spiritual direction

This is a vulnerable place for all concerned:

> *"In every consulting room there ought to be two rather frightened people. …*
> *If there are not, one wonders why they are bothering to find out what everyone knows."*
>
> (Bion, in Patrick Casement: *On Learning from the Patient*)

Prayer



Where is God in all this? (1)

The process of spiritual direction

- empathy
- awareness
- God

Well-being = relationship with God

One of the great temptations of religious living is the urge to intrude between God and other people.
(Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes*, p.25)

My job is not to solve people's problems or make them happy, but to help them see the grace operating in their lives.
(Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, pp.5–6)

Where is God in all this? (2)

Why not "Where is God in all this?"

- God in all things
- What if God is not in this?
- Seeing grace operating

Where is God in all this? (3)

What's the 'real' question?

- *Examen* → discernment → consolation
- When is there an increase in love for, and trust in, God?

The here and now encounter with God

Practising Presence (1)

"For any self to be free to enable another's freedom means that it must be in some way aware of the actuality, not only the possibility, of a **regard beyond desire** *– and so of its own being as a proper cause of joy, as a gift."*

(Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons*, p. 161)

Practising Presence (2)

Our primary focus is God

Our agenda is the relationship with God

Experiment

What stops you being fully present?

"Before anything or anyone is in relation with anything or anyone else, it's in relation to God. …

My neighbour is also always somebody who is already in a relation with God before they're in a relation with me.

That means there's a very serious limit on my freedom to make of my neighbour what I choose,

because, to put it very bluntly, they don't belong to me,

and their relation to me is not all that is true of them,

or even the most important thing that is true of them.

That is true of everything in the world…"

(Rowan Williams, *Being Human*, p.36–37)

God and the directee (2)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

It's the relationship

It's scary

Our presence

God and the directee (3)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Spiritual Direction

- Transparency
- *"What God is waiting for is not a right conclusion about a matter but for our suppleness in falling into his hands for him to work in us."*

  (Benedicta Ward, *Discernment – A Rare Bird*)
- Discernment: Consolation

God and the directee (4)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

James Finley on spiritual direction with Thomas Merton

1. How's it going?

…bearing witness to the incarnational preciousness of the ordinary life

2. How's it going in surrendering to God?

…the intimacy for the avoidance of the consummation that we long for

3. How's it going in discovering the depth of 2. percolating up through the details of 1.?

How's it going in surrendering yourself to the Mystery that has intimately accessed your heart and has brought you to this place that it might translate you into itself?

God and the directee (5)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Relationship with God in the here and now, e.g.

- What happens when you tell/show this to God?
- What happens if you sit down and look at this with God? - drawing / chair work
- What do you want to say to God about all this? What does God say back? How do you feel about this? (and so on)

God and the directee (6)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Ask about *Consolation*

- What is most significant in what you have said?
- Increased sense of trust and love for God
- a situation or self-insight that has brought a greater desire to draw near to God
- feelings of gratitude and generosity

God and the directee (7)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Ask about *desire*

What do you want?

What do you want from God?

What does God want for you?