

Living the Compassionate Practice of Christianity

Trinity Faith Formation | 2022-23

Last year Adult Forum focused on the four-gospel journey from Alexander John Shaia's book *Heart and Mind: The Four-Gospel Journey For Radical Transformation (3rd edition)*. This year we will focus on the "Eight Essential and Continuing Practices" of the Four Path Journey outlined in the final section of *Heart and Mind*.

Please note that it is not necessary to have read Shaia's book or to have taken part in the Adult Forum last year. If interested, the *Heart and Mind* book is available for purchase online (Quadratos.com) and a limited number of copies of the book can be borrowed from the Trinity library. There is also a six-part introductory video series to *Heart and Mind* that can be rented on the Quadratos website.

The eight practices identify core actions to help us mature in spirit and we will explore how to apply them in our daily lives. Forums take place from 9:15 to 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room beginning September 18. Information on topics and dates for each session will be provided separately. Everyone is welcome!

What to Expect

Each forum session will include a brief introduction by the session leader followed by small group discussions. The session concludes with the entire group exploring takeaways to use in your day-to-day life. Several sessions will be devoted to each of the Eight Practices:

1. Speak Truth and Unity
2. Open and Engage the Truths of Beauty
3. Find the Quiet Center
4. Absorb the Deeper Rhythms
5. Expand Into Risk
6. Learn to Let Go
7. Make the Great Leap of Trust
8. Build the New Jeru-Shalom

1. Speak Truth and Unity

We are responsible for what comes out of our mouths. Words have immense power and when addressing matters of importance we should strive to bring forth those deeply reflected long held truths. We should express our own truths, not a rehashed version of others, and never negate the truth of another. Be compassionate and work toward unity.

2. Open and Engage the Truths of Beauty

Beauty has three levels – the appreciative, the collaborative, and the creative. Regularly opening ourselves to the appreciation of beauty is invaluable. We should regularly seek out the places that open us to wonder and awe, to a feeling of the Holy, of being alive and connected to All. We need to release ourselves and revel in sight, touch, sound and smell, and use our imagination.

3. Find the Quiet Center

Historically, across spiritual traditions there have been two major forms of meditation. Apophatic worship has an underlying principle that God is beyond all earthly symbols and human efforts at understanding. The second form is called cataphatic worship, which expresses feelings rather

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than propositions. It affirms the knowledge of God using expressions of wonder and glory. Regardless of how we choose to find the quiet center, time and experience have shown that both approaches are immensely valuable. They lead us to our primary objective: a place where we can rest beneath our mind's chatter, gain perspective, and connect with Spirit.

4. Absorb the Deeper Rhythms

The four paths, the sequence of each day, and the order of the four seasons are significantly connected. This practice seeks to behold this truth – our connection with the rhythms of everyday life – with greater depth and mindfulness. The recommended discipline is a simple one: go outside once a day, take a deep breath, and reflect on our connections with the natural rhythms. For greater resonance with our ancestors, do this at sunset or sunrise.

5. Expand Into Risk

When we “opt out” of our growth as individuals, the result is some variety of withering – we grow rigid, narrow, timid, fantastical, or depressed. If we continue the journey, our major question becomes knowing when to risk and finding ways to support our courage. The consequences of our actions today – even of our words – are a great deal more far-reaching than they have ever been. At the same time, on a personal level many lack the support systems they used to find in families, neighborhoods, and social and fraternal organizations.

6. Learn to Let Go

Don't be attached to results. It is possible that next to truth-speaking, this principle affects an emotionally and spiritually mature life more substantially than all the other practices, yet no action or striving whatsoever is required. We grasp that it is completely outside our power to control how “life” changes, but completely up to us to use our best efforts to improve ourselves – and that life will tend to improve if we do. At this moment we release all of our efforts, our hopes, our doubts, and our fears – every single one of them – to the power we know is greater than ours.

7. Make the Great Leap of Trust

Trust may well be *the* issue of our time. Fear lurks beneath the lack of trust we feel today. What do we fear? Is it pain, loneliness, loss of position, loss of respect? Is it possible that underneath all of these fears lies one core dread: the fear of not having love? The act of trust requires courage. The dilemma is, how do we fill ourselves with heart and gain the capacity to trust and overcome our fear without being just plain foolhardy? This is the heart – and truly the soul – of the entire journey.

8. Build the New Jeru-Shalom

It is our great human challenge to creatively discover ways through which all voices, all perspectives, and all needs in single communities, single countries, and on one globe can be heard and accommodated. *We all* belong. Genuine empathy arises through the activity of service. When we see through another's eyes, our separations disappear as the largely illusory divisions they actually are. From this place of new understanding, we can join together and find the creative solutions that allow us to become authentic communities.