

Discipleship Spotlight: Contemplative Companion Cohort

Joel and Patty Hogan have had the privilege of facilitating a group of Madison members, representing all three sites, in a 10 month faith journey in a cohort called "Contemplative Companion Cohort". We began with a two day face to face meeting last February and had planned four additional two day meetings, but COVID hit. We modified the curriculum to monthly Zoom meetings, which conclude in December. The Hogans had facilitated similar cohorts in Cambodia and the Philippines in 2019 and felt the Spirit's nudging to repeat the learning cohort in Madison. In addition to personally inviting a few people, each of the pastors were asked for recommendations as to whom might benefit from such participation. The goal of the Madison Contemplative Companion Cohort is two-fold: first, to grow in intimacy with and obedience to God through learning contemplative practices for experiencing God more deeply and, second, to learn to be an encouraging listener and spiritual companion for others in their spiritual formation.

The following are some comments from the participants regarding the value of the Cohort in their spiritual formation:

- It has been transformative seeing different ways for me to connect with God, but also learning more about myself, enhancing my connection with God and with others. Another transformative experience is doing triads with this group. I've really enjoyed it. I am a small group leader for BSF this year and I'm hoping to use some of the tools of being the encourager in the triads and asking beautiful questions.
- I have loved the emphasis on listening, on attuning myself to God and others. The Triads have been wonderful places to practice this kind of attunement. It has been a rich experience, for which I'm grateful.
- I have grown in the way I ask questions. Really, "beautiful questions" have been transformative. Several times a week, I disciple young men. The training on how to use beautiful questions has transformed the way I relate to guys. I believe the result has been growth for us both! I have also grown in my use of contemplative disciplines. I am very grateful.
- The training on the Enneagram helped me to grow in acceptance of my being a number 2 (helper) and its dark side and helped me to set better boundaries and think through what I need and to articulate that to myself and others. Learning about my spiritual practices that go along with my temperament was helpful and showed me it was how God wired me to receive his love in specific disciplines that make it easier for me to engage with Him.
- Learning new contemplative practices has opened my spirit to richer, deeper relationship with God. I sense that God is equipping me to love those he gives me to serve more effectively, with more grace. As I obey him by speaking what he gives me to give others, he affirms this calling and encourages me to step out with even more courage.
- The idea of combining spiritual companionship and music ministry in the form of a Worship Musician's Guild seems like the result of a long conversation with the Lord. And that is good. I also went fishing with a friend and we had a good

conversation about how COVID is affecting our spiritual lives. I consciously employed the listening and questioning techniques. He seemed to be thirsty for a way to work through these things with someone. It was encouraging to me to put the spiritual companion approach to work.