



Dear St. John's Family,

We would like to invite you to participate in a spiritually deepening and enriching opportunity St. John's Church will be offering starting in late January. Here is a brief overview of this new small group (6-8 individuals) program.

If you are searching for something more in your religious life, participating in this experience might be a wonderful way to begin your Epiphany.

This six session program called Holy Conversations/Holy Relationships will meet weekly for about 90 minutes each time. It is designed for those who may be at a point in their life when they might be asking or exploring these kind of questions:

- Do you feel an inner spiritual excitement of wanting something more from life but not sure what?
- Does it sometimes bother you that there does not seem to be much of a relationship (or connection) between your spiritual life and your "real life?"
- Even though your life is busy (maybe too busy), do you have an underlying sense of lack of fulfillment or general emptiness from all you do?
- Do your current religious understandings, practices, or activities not really help you with the challenges of your daily life?
- Do you have important religious or spiritual questions that you feel you cannot discuss in church or that there is no place in church to discuss them?

Each of the six sessions functions as a small worship experience beginning with a prayer and ending with a worship liturgy. In between there is a meaningful conversation related to each week's reading on a different spiritual aspect of Christian life. Your only "homework" will be to read and reflect upon that short reading prior to each session. Each session is designed to be about 90 minutes. Some groups of no more than eight will be on Zoom. Others will be face to face following appropriate protocols. The goal of the program is that participants find it a transforming experience that inspires them to continue to deepen and enrich their spiritual lives.

Each group will have one facilitator, who is consider an equal member of the group with the same level of understanding of each lesson and is not consider the teacher. The role of the facilitator is fundamentally to help the group adhere to its norms (attached below), make sure the sessions start and end on time, and to lead the group in processing any special problems or difficulties that may arise within the group dynamic.

The discussion during each session will focus on a different “spiritual tool” for your spiritual toolkit. They then proceed in a progressive manner in which each builds upon the other. Prior to each session you will be given a short reading which may include video and audio clips as well as short passages of scripture. In those readings you will encounter brief exposures to a variety of spiritual teachers as they share their different insights and perspectives on the theme of that week’s focus.

Different members of your group will likely respond very differently to the variety of diverse ways Christians perceive things. Listening respectfully to where others are coming from is what will make your conversations interesting, deepening and hopefully meaningful. Deeper and more spiritually powerful relationships may emerge—thus Holy Conversations/Holy Relationships.

All are welcome to join this program but we request you agree to attend all six sessions, to do the weekly readings and reflections, and to honor and respect the other individuals in the group by adhering to the group norms (attached below). What, you may ask, if I cannot commit to all of those things? This experience is for those who are able and willing to commit to all of those three things at this time.

If you know you want to participate please respond to the email, along with your top three preferences on a day and time that works best for you, if no preference then let us know you are flexible. We are anticipating the sessions starting either the week of January 17th or 24th and concluding by the first week in March. Different groups may start at different times.

To enroll in the program please respond by email to jedgar@stjohnstampa.org and include your name, best contact information, and a few group meeting times that work best for you. Space is limited so please respond quickly if you would like to participate.

Finally, if you would like more information, please check on the recorded Zoom link below for a video presentation of the program followed by a question and answer period of some who attended the earlier Zoom session.

Watch the recorded Zoom session with this link: <https://youtu.be/CjFHw4tF4gU>

And read more about Holy Conversations at this link: <https://stjohnstampa.org/wp-content/uploads/Having-Holy-Conversations.pdf>