

Church Around the Table September 20, 2026

Spiritual Disciplines: Community & Conversation

Call to Worship: drawn from James 1:19-21

One: Come, let us gather with open hearts and patient minds.

All: We come to listen; quick to hear, slow to speak.

One: Let us lay aside quick anger and harsh words, making room for God's gentle presence.

All: We welcome with humility the living word implanted in our hearts.

One: Let us worship God together in peace, grace, and quiet trust.

All: Amen.

Opening question: Whether we lean introverted or extraverted, we value community connections and conversations in different ways. What do you find most meaningful about community conversations?

Scripture: Colossians 4:5-6 (NRSV)

Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

Scripture Context: (more notes from Ben on the reverse)

More than half of American adults experience meaningful levels of loneliness¹. This scripture text from Colossians, calls faith

¹<https://www.npr.org/2023/05/02/1173418268/loneliness-connection-mental-health-dementia-surgeon-general>

communities to prioritize meaningful communication and authentic action, urging people to emphasize a “well-seasoned speech.” Salt may seem like a strange thing to include in a text about communication, but salt was an incredibly important commodity in the Ancient Near East. It was used for preserving food, for seasoning meals, and also for temple sacrifices. Salt was so precious that it was sometimes traded like money, which is where our English word “salary” comes from. Tying in the wisdom from our Call to Worship from James, Spiritual Disciplines of community and conversation move beyond passive hearing to active, compassionate engagement, filled with grace, demonstrating empathy and connectivity to all.

Response Questions:

- What does it mean to “season” our conversations?
- How can communities provide a space for *all* voices to be heard?
- How can “insiders” remember to include “outsiders” in our ongoing conversations?

Sharing - A time to share from our lives.

Close sharing in whatever way the Spirit moves. You may choose to use ‘*God of love, hear our prayer*’ after each sharing, and close with: *Holy One, you meet us between the words, beneath the words, beyond the words. Hear our prayers. Amen*

Benediction: Go forth in peace. May your words be seasoned with grace, your heart quick to listen, and your spirit rooted in love. May you cultivate community wherever you tread, carrying God's presence into every conversation. Amen.

Pastor's Note (not necessarily part of the CATT service):

As I began to prepare for this weekend, my mind went in a few different directions...

The first direction was an impulse to change the focus of our time together - don't we already spend enough time celebrating community? Aren't we already a congregation that claims to value everyone's voice? But I reminded myself that in a world where loneliness is on the rise, and social distancing has become more commonplace, perhaps we need to remind ourselves of the value we add to the world when we lean on these foundational values.

The second thought was that despite our emphasis on community, we are a congregation made up of many folks who would consider themselves to be more introverted than extraverted.

And so we arrive at these two important Spiritual Disciplines - community and conversation. May your Church Around the Table conversations be fruitful.

- Ben

PS – Jean Wise, at HealthySpirituality.org offers an introvert's guide to community - perhaps some of us will find this list helpful!

1. **Pray** – Ask God for courage to meet new people, to speak boldly for him and to find ways to relax among community. God created community. God is community.
2. **Start small** – Begin with a known group or a small number of people. Practice asking them questions about themselves. Listen. Engage. Take a plate of cookies to a neighbor.
3. **Plan** – look at your calendar and commit to community. Where and when will you be involved? Are you attempting to connect on a regular basis? Planning ahead gives me a sense of confidence.
4. **Set limitations** – Determine boundaries. Say no if necessary.
5. **Create times to recharge yourself** in silence and rest. Take a walk by yourself. Read that book. Pray.
6. **Don't give up.** Not all groups work smoothly, even for the most extroverted person. Keep trying.
7. **Brainstorm** all the possible communities you may be interested in. Pick something you like.
8. **Make friends with another introvert**, partner together in trying new situations.
9. **Make friends with an understanding, supportive extrovert.** We have a good friend who just thrives being with people. I am more comfortable in crowds with him because I know he will carry on the conversation and introduce me to others.
10. **Be curious.** Ask questions and find common ground with those you are interacting with. Be genuinely interested in getting to know someone better.
11. **Be yourself.** Introverts add to every group through their unique gifts, listening and observation.
12. **Don't make assumptions.** Others in the group may be uncomfortable too and looking for a friend.
13. **Name your feelings.** It is ok to stretch out of your comfort zones at times. Recognize your hesitation as natural and take baby steps.
14. **Be realistic.** Most people don't really have large circle of close friends, even the extroverts.
15. **Don't overthink** – Enjoy!