

Part 3: God's Invitation

Choose a facilitator and spend 5–10 minutes gathering ourselves in silence for this time together.

God invites each of us to enter into a personal relationship with God-self; a relationship of intimately shared feelings and friendship, of growing trust and faith, one that is affirming and life-giving. There are no conditions to be met before accepting this invitation other than that we respond, that we open ourselves to receive and that we take God seriously at God's word. It is a letting go of our controls and defences.

God's invitation to each of us is to risk accepting ourselves and to begin to love ourselves as we are right now, as God does. Our usual response to our need for love is to 'sort ourselves out first', make ourselves acceptable so that God and others can love us – which invariably leads to more self-improvement projects or alternatively to despondency or despair.

The invitation is not to enter something still to come, but to open ourselves to an existing reality with God who already loves us, who is already caring for us and sustaining our every breath and heart-beat. 'Mother Nature' and her so-called laws are really God's constant and enlivening involvement in every pulse of life.

We need to understand clearly that there is nothing we can do to earn or deserve this relationship of love with God. It is all gift on God's part, as are our lives – unmerited gift. Jesus finished the work of reconciliation on the cross. It is only in this present state of 'disrepair' that we can receive God's love, and it is this very love for us that enables us to change, letting go of the oppressive structures that restrict us.

For 15 minutes, explore Romans 5:1–11.

Try to get some sense of what you feel about these words and concepts. How real is all this for you?

1. What feelings do you experience as you consider this passage?

20. What are these feelings saying about your attitudes to God's love for you?

21. What is clearest to you now?

Write in your journal what has been going on inside you, however confused or negative it may be. You do not have to share things you are not comfortable with. Share with the group something of what you can. (30 minutes)

Decide who will facilitate for next week and end with the following prayer which is adapted from the Celtic tradition:

Christ stands before us, and peace is in his mind

Rest in the calm of all calm

Rest in the guidance of guidance,

Rest in the love of all loves:

Rest, beloved, in the God of life.

During the week, try to find a few periods of time to sit somewhere quiet, perhaps in a garden and reflect on God's invitation to you. Listen to the reply of your attitudes and your heart.



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