Spiritual Life Center program objectives and core identity

Thu, 24 Sept 26

Housekeeping

- Poll date correction: Sunday the 4th should have been Monday the 5th
  - Committed to no weekends; the error was accidental
  - Anyone who hasn't responded should do so via the reminder email
- Doodle poll replaced: free account limited to one poll per month, so different tools may appear going forward
- Website issue: curriculum links showed only a brochure, not actual documents
  - Multiple participants confirmed the same experience
  - Fix planned for the following day; all working materials will be housed there

Tonight's Plan Change

- Original plan was to review Objective 1 submissions from all three teams
  - Two teams submitted 4-5 items each; one team submitted ~40 items
  - Full review would have taken 3+ hours
- Revised approach: share a "portrait so far" document highlighting convergent themes
  - Full item lists from all three teams will also be distributed
  - Teams review independently and respond to questions in the document

Four Convergent Core Themes (Objective 1)

- Being present to reality: accepting what is, not what we wish it to be
- A contemplative and/or discerning stance
- Ongoing inner formation, self-awareness, and deepening of one's own life (holistically, not only spiritually)
- Rootedness in the holy (language still under discussion; see below)

Language and Identity of the Program

- "Rootedness in the holy" raised inclusion questions, particularly for non-Christian and non-theist participants
  - Andree suggested "holy/wholly" (h-o-l-y / w-h-o-l-l-y) to hold both spiritual and secular meanings
  - Oscar noted "sacred" travels more easily across traditions than "holy" or "divine"
  - Denise cautioned that adjusting Christian language to be more inclusive is different from genuinely being inclusive, and that the program should be transparent about its assumptions
  - Brian suggested "healthy" may be more central than "holy" to what the program actually teaches
  - "Rootedness in healthy spirituality" floated as an alternative
- Agnes grounded the discussion historically: the program started in Catholic spiritual direction traditions but has been guided by an opening movement toward broader spirit
- Language question left open; held as an ongoing issue for further work

Program Identity and Core Distinctives

- Oscar's framing: the program does not form people toward a predetermined spirituality; it awakens what is already in the person
  - The spirit is trusted to be present within the directee; the director's role is to evoke, not instill

    - This is a genuine distinguishing quality vs. programs that move people in a defined direction
- Brian's framing (drawing from Soul Keeping development): the deepest teaching is holism
    - Accepting more of yourself, including shadow and grief, as part of wholeness
    - Symmetry between self-acceptance and acceptance of others
    - "Doing your own work" as the most valuable thing a director brings
- Andree's framing: the core skill is flexibility and deep listening, not knowledge of traditions
    - Language and approach shift to meet each directee where they are
    - Traditions (Benedictine, Ignatian, Buddhist, Sufi, etc.) are resources, not the curriculum
- Shared norm surfaced: listening is better than forming; the real is fundamentally good
- Annie: the language shift from "spiritual ministry" to "companion/director" reflects this wholeness orientation

Diversity, Tradition, and Coherence

- Program draws from multiple traditions: Benedictine, Ignatian, Tibetan Buddhism, Howard Thurman, eco-spirituality, African American voices (SDI anthology), Wiccan perspectives
- Brian's caution: too much diversity without a core risks incoherence and loss of program distinctiveness
    - Embracing diversity of participants is different from embracing diversity of worldviews as the program's foundation
- Courtney's intake interviews: two Jewish women and one Muslim woman all preferred a director outside their own tradition
    - Reason: avoids embedded assumptions and the risk of being told "you've got it wrong"
    - Muslim directee paired with a liberal Catholic director; after one session, reported it was "amazing" because the director said "tell me more" rather than "I know about that"
- Marilyn: deep knowledge of a tradition can be a hindrance if it pulls toward theological argument rather than listening

Process and Structure Going Forward

- Parallel processing on all objectives was overestimated; the depth of discussion requires adjustment
    - Will continue parallel processing for Objective 1 and possibly one or two more
    - Plan to split objectives across subcommittees after that, with each team sharing findings for group response
- Each subcommittee asked to review all three teams' goal lists and the "portrait so far" document
    - Apply honest scrutiny, including to their own contributions
- Each team to send notes/findings to Courtney for posting to the website
- Curriculum inventory will be the next objective once Objective 1 is complete
- Poll results to be sent out the following day along with tonight's notes and the referenced documents

Next Steps

- **Fix website curriculum links**
- **Send "portrait so far" document and full team goal lists to all participants**
- **Collect and distribute poll results, then schedule next meeting**
- **Each subcommittee to review all goal submissions and the portrait document**