**“Cultivating Sacred Space” week 2: Cultivating Connections: A Story in Seasons**

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Begin by discussing how you experienced last week’s prayer practice (The Welcoming Prayer) during the week. How did it go? What seemed to work for you and what was not so helpful? Is this a practice you could see yourself using in the future?
2. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was helpful? What did you wonder?
3. What are your earliest memories of prayer? Are there aspects of praying when you were younger you maintain today?
4. Who or what has influenced the way you pray?
5. Discuss these quotes from Sunday’s message found in an essay on prayer by Rabbi Abraham Heschel from the book: “Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity”, edited by Susannah Heschel.
* Prayer remains important, even when we ignore it for a while, like a candlestick set aside for the day. Night will come, and we shall again gather round its tiny flame. Our affection for the trifles of living will be mixed with longing for the comfort of all people.
* However, prayer is no panacea, no substitute for action. It is, rather, like a beam thrown from a flashlight before us into the darkness. It is in this light that we who grope, stumble, and climb discover where we stand, what surrounds us, and the course which we should choose. Prayer makes visible the right and reveals the hampering and the false. In its radiance we behold the worth of our efforts, the range of our hopes, and the meaning of our deeds. Envy and fear, despair and resentment, anguish and grief, which lie heavily upon the heart, are dispelled like shadows by its light.
* Sometimes prayer is more than a light before us, it is the light within us. a passage from Sunday. What are your thoughts now?
1. As a group do the practice on the back of this page. It will help if someone can guide the practice by reading each step slowly and then allowing a few minutes of silence between each one.
2. When you have finished the practice discuss how you each experienced it. What happened and how helpful was it or not? Then commit to doing this practice individually during the week.

**Prayer practice for the week**

Step 1: Read a Biblical passage, a spiritual reflection on prayer, or think of someone in need of prayer.

Step 2: Clasp your hands, bow your head, and think about what you have read or the person in need.

Step 3: Open your arms and your heart.

Step 4: Clasp your hands again, offer thanks for your gifts and blessings, ask for forgiveness, ask for support for those in need.

Step 5: Listen to all the sounds around you. Identify the individual sounds. Reflect.

Step 6: Close with “Amen”.