**InHabit**

**Introduction and Course Structure**

This new course will be offered online from January to December 2021.

The course seeks to enable participants to create a pattern for faithful living and a shape for deepening their life in God. It does so by encouraging the development of practices in prayer and reflection that foster a balanced life lived from and in reference to Christ as the Centre. Practical Christian living is explored through eight directions or ‘stances’ for growth: UP, DOWN, IN, WITH, FOR, OUT, UNDER AND THROUGH …. and the relationship and tensions between them. The course makes use of the physical structure and spiritual rhythm of the monastery as an image and symbol of whole life discipleship and practical prayerfulness.

Over the duration of the course a community of ordinary, down to earth ‘monastics’ is built! We will be reflecting (personally and together) on the whole of our lives in ways that will encourage a deeper experience  of prayer and response to God’s purpose and calling. The material and means of delivery of each session aims to set up an action-reflection cycle of learning through building simple habits of contemplative practice and active outworking in everyday life.

To this end each day-long session will include:

\*Communal prayers at the start and end of the day

\*Teaching input and facilitated discussion

\*Time spent building a practice of contemplative prayer. This half hour of shared silence will not follow a particular technique, approach or ‘school of prayer’ but where helpful may draw on simple resources to create space in which we remember and settle into God’s Presence.

\*Time alone with resources for personal reflection

\*Time within a small ‘Journey Group’ (maximum three or four people) to discuss, share, encourage and apply the learning of the day and the wider journey of faith and life

\*Practical guidance for living out and applying the material explored in the session; often with a suggested ‘practice to practice’ between sessions

\*Take away material to read and further resources on the theme of the day to explore if desired

**Course Content**

**Day 1**

Introduction: Action – Reflection model of learning,

Mapping out the Monastery : eight directions for growth

Getting into the Habit: inhabiting rhythm and daily practice

Introduction to Patterns for Living and Rule of Life : building a trellis

**Day 2**

Well : CENTRE

Drawing on Life giving water: praying well

Returning to Christ as the Centre

Developing contemplative practice: being in the Holy Here under the gaze of God’s love.

Cloister : CONNECTED WHOLE

Making the connections work

Minding the gap: the practice of sacred pausing and another look at  praying the monastic hours

**Day 3**

Chapel : REACHING UP

Presence and ‘Temple’

Communal worship

What and where is church?

**Day 4**

Garden : ROOTED DOWN

Seasons and Sabbath

Environment and Incarnation : heaven and earth

Embodied prayer and earthed spirituality

**Day 5**

Refectory : SHARING WITH

Trinity and Community

Hospitality of heart and home

Simplicity and sharing life

**Day 6**

Infirmary : CARING FOR

Self care

Pastoral care of others

Listening and attention

Vesselhood: Containing brokenness and carrying wholeness

**Day 7**

Library : INVEST

Scripture and study

Reading the signs of our time

Culture, counter culture and the prophet’s voice

Discernment and wearing our witness

**Day 8**

Monastic Cell : DWELLING IN

Finding our story in the Big Story

Dreams and desires

Coming home to who we are

Personhood and poustinia: who am I to be?

**Day 9**

Kitchen : WORK OUT

What is ‘good’ work?

Laundry and liturgy and the ministry of the mundane

Is there such a thing as work/life balance?

**Day 10**

Scriptorium : CALLED OUT

Vocation : what is mine to do?

Making our mark : calling and creativity

Service and the offering of ourselves

Social transformation and the building of God’s kingdom

**Day 11**

Crypt : GOING UNDER

Stuck in the dark: navigating crisis

Being human

Facing doubt and the other side of faith

Can these bones live?

**Day 12**

Door : MOVING THROUGH

Liminal spaces and life stages

Change and transition

Leaving a legacy

Endings and beginnings ; cycles of life and death

**Day 13**

Monastery : REVIEW

Reflecting back: praying forwards

Making our vow; revisiting Patterns for Living and Rule of Life

Living faithfully

**How the course will be offered**

The experience of lockdown along with the uncertainty of how Covid will continue to affect our social, work and church life means that many are finding themselves in a season of change, transition and questioning of how they might journey as people of faith in these challenging times. InHabit offers a potential way (and community) in which to reflect and discern what might be ‘ours to be and do’ at this particular point in our lives.

The original plan was to offer InHabit as a face to face gathering with a two day retreat at the start and end of the course with the option of these ‘beginning and ending’ retreat days being residential. With the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic the launch of this course was delayed and a decision was made to offer it as an online course instead. Whilst this has its technical challenges it also provides an opportunity to offer the course more widely, making it possible for those who cannot travel to a central location to access it and enabling participants to have the space to reflect personally and share with others from the comforts of their own home. The course will still have the focus of two days of input at the start (in January) and end (in December) of the course with a break for holiday in August. Trusting that potential further lockdown and social distancing measures will ease over 2021 it may be possible that the final two days of the course scheduled for December could be face to face meetings.

**The planned dates for the course starting in 2021 are as follows:**

Day 1: Thursday 21st January

Day 2: Thursday 28th January

Day 3: Thursday 11th February

Day 4: Thursday 11th March

Day 5: Thursday 8th April

Day 6: Thursday 13th May

Day 7: thursday 10th June

Day 8: Thursday 8th July

Break for August

Day 9: Thursday 9th September

Day 10: Thursday 14th October

Day 11: Thursday 11th November

Day 12: Thursday 2nd December

Day 13: Thursday 9th December

Each day of the course will be offered via Zoom and a few days before the upcoming course day an invite will be sent to participants via email along with the course content for that session which participants can download and print out as required. All the material for shared prayers and personal reflection will be available on screen as well as the day unfolds. For those who cannot print their course material at home a printed course handbook will be available. This handbook can be purchased by course participants if desired for a small additional cost to cover printing and postage costs.

Each online course session will run from 9.30 am until 4pm. The first half hour at the start of the day and 15mins at the end of the day will be the chance to meet and talk with other course participants over coffee.

The approximate timings of the day will be as follows:

9.30:  Arrivals and coffee

10.00 – 10.15:  Communal prayers at the start of the day

10.15 -11.00:  Input/teaching (this will be the exploration of some material on the day’s theme and will often include some time for discussion too)

11.00 -12.00:  Time for personal reflection (this will be a chance for some space away from the screen with some resource material to use)

12.00 -12.30:  Contemplative prayer  (this will form the centre of the day; a time of shared silence in which we return to awareness of God’s presence)

12.30 -1.15:  Lunch: again this is a chance to get lunch away from the screen or chat with other participants on screen as you eat!

1.15 -2.00:  Input/teaching

2.00 -3.15:  Journey Groups (see below)

3.15 -3.45:  Plenary and prayers at the end of the day

3.45 – 4.00:  Tea and depart

**A word about Journey Groups**

Journey Groups are a key component of the course, both for the building of this little online community but also as a powerful means of deepening and enriching our making of the faith journey. Each participant of the course will meet with up to three or four other participants at a designated point during each of the course sessions (via zoom break out rooms). Where possible these journey groups (of three or four people) will remain the same throughout the course to enable people to build relationship and trust. It may be that a group of friends or existing prayer triplet or Home Group members may all like to be participants on the Inhabit course together and request to be formed into a Journey Group. The hope is that these Journey Groups will continue beyond the duration of the course and provide an experience that might be shared with (or facilitated for) others. Guidelines for a simple format and the creation of boundaries in these groups will be explained at the start of the course. These groups will enable participants to listen to each other and share together how God is meeting them in the joys and challenges of their daily lives and perhaps also what is resonating with them personally from the course content.

**Who is the course for?**

Our hope is that the course will be of interest for clergy and lay people alike.  We also hope that some clergy will benefit from the monthly space for reflection and prayer and ongoing discernment of their own life in God as well as in their role as church leaders. Clergy and Home Group leaders may choose to participate in the course themselves and then facilitate the course for other groups. The course will ask for a commitment from participants to attend (where at all possible) all of the sessions. This is because each session builds on the other sessions to form a shape and because participation in each session enables a real community of friendship and sharing to form. Practice takes practice and InHabit is about getting in the Habit! Having said all this, illness and circumstances that are out of our control do happen and hopefully the community that is formed through this course will be able to hold participants in support and prayer if they really have to miss a session at some point over the year.

The course offers something of a 360 degree stock take. During the turbulent and unsettling times we are living in the course will hopefully offer some grounding and centring in our relationship with God and a chance to navigate prayerfully and thoughtfully through possible transition and change in our lives. The symbolism of the monastery can be seen in terms of sanctuary, boundaried spaces contained in the rhythms and habits of ordinary life, lived attentively to the Spirit of God. InHabit offers a rich visual image of our inner life in God and its outworking. Through this we may be formed and shaped to live even the mundane aspects of our lives as called, held (contained) and enlivened people of faith, with God at the centre. There is an emphasis on rooting prayerful and reflective practice within the day to day patterns of our lives rather than too much elevated spiritual straining! The course honours and celebrates our human-ness as the place God has chosen to Inhabit.

**Costs**

The cost of the InHabit course is £150. This will include attendance by Zoom at each of the 13 live streamed course days. It will also include the downloadable files for each session’s content, reflection resources and prayer materials used during each day’s sessions. There will also be one or two further resources which will be sent to participants by post over the duration of the course. If participants also wish to have a full colour printed course handbook as well as (or instead of) printing out their own material over the year then there will be a small additional cost to cover printing costs.

If we are able to offer the last one or possibly two days of the course as face to face meetings and participants wish to make this into a residential retreat then there will be an additional cost for accommodation and meals. This is likely to be at Epiphany House in Truro and the practicalities and costs for this option will be decided at some point in 2021 as and when we see how management of Covid 19 unfolds during the year, and in response to the participants’ preferences.

It will be possible to pay for the course either as one upfront payment or to spread the cost as a monthly Direct Debit over the year that the course runs. We hope we will be able to offer some bursary assistance for those for whom the cost of the course makes it inaccessible. We will also have more information soon about the possibility of recorded sessions for those who are unable to attend on the days of the live course dates.

An application form will be available from October 31st 2020.

For further information please contact Bridget Macaulay by email at: [vesseltrust@gmail.com](mailto:vesseltrust@gmail.com)