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### Reflecting without words

*The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection.*

*(Michelangelo)*

*It's on the strength of observation and reflection that one finds a way. So we must dig and delve unceasingly.* (Claude Monet)

Reflecting without words is the tool that we usually get the strongest reaction to as many of us carry negative perceptions of our ability to be creative or artistic. Some may turn to this chapter first and others skip past it. Both of us would at one time have avoided anything arty. Sally was so grateful that at school she could drop all practical subjects before external exams had to be taken. However, now artwork is one of the most valued tools in her box. She sometimes needs to explore how she is feeling about an issue because something is bubbling under the surface but it is hard to get whatever it is to emerge. At these times she uses oil pastels and colour to reflect. For example, prior to major surgery she explored how she felt and the potential positive and liberating consequences were expressed in greens and yellows but there was a small dark patch which reflected the scary stories she read when researching her condition online and the bit in the consent form which said she might die from this procedure! The activity helped her to be real about her fears but see them in proportion to the benefits.

Jeremiah 18 uses the image of God as a potter and this was the starting point for an exercise Gina led with a group. There were all sorts of coloured balls of Plasticine and each person was asked to choose one and create a 'pot' which represented him or her. This led to a reflection on diversity and uniqueness and an encouragement to appreciate the way that God had created each person there. It gave a visual illustration to an issue that had been causing problems

within the group and gave an opportunity to talk about the need to treat each other with respect and listen.

### Why reflect without words?

In this chapter we explore ways in which we reflect that are not predominantly word-based. One theory of learning styles suggests that some of us learn best visually (see <[www.vark-learn.com](http://www.vark-learn.com)> for a questionnaire to explore this) so some of the tools described here may be particularly useful. One of the reasons for wanting to explore reflection without words is because it is a way of getting to our feelings rather than reflection remaining a head-based activity. Although ideally feelings should usually be explored as part of being reflective, sometimes this happens more readily when reflecting without words. When we look around our lecture room or training session we sometimes notice people doodling. MacBeth suggests that some people can 'listen and concentrate best when we are seemingly distracted by other activity – in other words, when we are allowed to play'. She goes on to comment that when we are playful we are often at our most honest as we drop our external persona (2007, p. 39). Although not all reflecting without words is necessarily playful, some is and can be a helpful medium for some to access parts of themselves that tend to get buried.

In reflecting without words we will be engaging our imaginations. Our imagination can be a resource to us or an adversary and, as Allen posits, imagination reveals our deepest self, our soul (1995, p. 3). She suggests that making art is a way of exploring our imagination and of exploring more options (1995, p. 4). Cameron values the insight we gain from creative activity; she argues that often it is the ability to read the signs that may be a change for us and can lead to change (1996, p. 118). She wisely suggests that 'Without deliberately cultivated compassion for ourselves, spiritual and creative growth becomes a forced march through the hostile territory of our own judgements' (1996, p. 118).

Inherent in much of the material we have read is the notion of using art therapeutically. Malchiodi notes that 'Throughout history, visual art has been used to make sense of crisis, pain and psychic upheaval' (1998, p. 133). Dalley describes how art can be seen as symbolic speech, as communicating non-verbally through symbols,

and that 'symbolizing feelings and experiences in images can be a more powerful means of expression and communication than verbal description, and at the same time, is able to render these feelings and experiences less threatening' (1984, p. xiii). Thus this chapter comes with a warning too: using art may stir up powerful feelings. Any time we engage with making art and reflecting, or ask others to engage in this way, we need to be aware of the potential consequences. This means that we should not use it with a group unless we are sure that we have the skills (or that others who are there do) to help people process some of the deep emotions that may arise. There is a potential risk in many activities but as responsible ministers we do need to assess the potential dangers of activities like this and warn participants of what may emerge and have a plan in place to deal with anything that needs processing beyond the session.

Reflecting without words means that we need to develop our capacity to see, to look, to observe. Hieb counsels us: 'Do not worry about gazing. Authentic seeing is restful, energizing, transforming and completely natural. Seeing will slow you down. Seeing will center you. Seeing will intensify your experiences of the ordinary. Seeing is a creative act' (2005, p. 23).



*What is your response to reflecting without words? Is this a 'go to' or 'run away' place?*

## Visual theology

We first encountered this term when reading Penny Brook's thesis on religion, art and the Australian landscape and really liked what she had to say about how art is theology too. We had used images, sculptures, photographs, etc. for theological reflection but this went further. She writes:

Visual texts are vital hermeneutical tools in themselves in that they have the capacity to critique and reveal deeper understanding and knowledge of the human condition and the questions that originate within it. Within religious faith, visual images as hermeneutical tools offer the possibility for new understanding and knowledge that enables a better understanding of its past as grounding for more authentic theologising and religious practice within the present human context.

(Brook, 2006, p. 345)

## Contexts

As part of her thesis Penny Brook had developed some works of art that were designed to be used in worship and stated that:

The artworks are also meant to function as pedagogical, dialogical and hermeneutical tools. This means that they can be utilised to teach, discuss, debate, critique, deconstruct and reconstruct traditional theological and cultural notions and assumptions in the search for a deeper understanding of the Christian story and therefore of human life.

(Brook, 2006, p. 285)

She also makes the point that historically works of art were often made for a specific site. While this is obvious for something like the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and some stained-glass windows, we have rarely reflected on the context of the development of works of art in the way that we automatically would do when considering a written text.

We live in Birmingham, where the cathedral is famous for its stained-glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones, which tend to evoke strong emotions either way. They are clearly products of their time, pre-Raphaelite images which portray characters in a culturally specific way. When Sally sees them she is taken in her mind to our picture of Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* which we have because it was her grandma's. The images are able to access things in her subconscious that words alone rarely do.

## Creative processes

The phrase 'inner images meet paint and paper and inner music becomes the sound of a symphony orchestra' (Darley and Heath, 2008, p. 17) is one way of looking at the creative process. It can be helpful to identify our own images and metaphors that describe what being creative means to us. When reflecting without words there may be stages that we go through which can be helpful to understand (adapted from Malchiodi, 1998, pp. 66–8):

- *Preparation* is vital. It involves getting the materials you need together and preparing yourself for what you want to reflect on and making sure you have articulated the intention you have in your reflection.
- *Incubation* is the stage where you explore the mental image of what it is you are trying to create and see it begin to take shape. As you

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begin to create, new elements and ideas may well emerge to be integrated into your art work, which will be most effective if you let your intuition, improvisation and sense of play flourish.

- *Illumination* is the time when you have a breakthrough or 'aha' moment and you feel a sense of satisfaction with what you have created.
- *Verification/revision* is the last stage where you may add final touches to your creation and ensure that it is in the form that you want.

### **Signs and symbols**

When reflecting using art, signs or symbols may be an integral part of anything that emerges. In Jungian psychology a sign is a shorthand way of communicating something that is already known, for example, a loaf of bread indicating a baker's shop. Symbols are more dynamic and may emerge from the unconscious. Symbols may hold more than one meaning and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Thus the symbol of a fish in an advertisement may mean that it is a Christian business or related to surfing, the sea, fishing, etc. If symbols appear in our art or reflection they can help us in exploring and possibly resolving the issue because a symbol is outside of ourselves and we may find it easier to engage with it there (Darley and Heath, 2008, pp. 18–19). Thus when we create art we need to be aware that 'all artwork does have a symbolic quality, because it is pregnant with connection. Pieces relate deeply and dynamically to the artist who gave birth to them' (Darley and Heath, 2008, p. 21). We may well have developed our own personal sign and symbolic language. As you become more practised at this kind of reflection you may recognize themes and/or images that regularly occur in your work and begin to see their meaning and importance.

### **Symbolic acts**

Sometimes it is an action that we reflect on or that in retrospect has meaning. As part of a retreat we led on Cuthbert's Island, in a Eucharist Paul felt prompted to ask to pour out some of the wine in the place where we had communion to represent something in his life that he was working through with God. It spoke to him of sacrifice and pain; and now when we are on Holy Island looking out

at Cuthbert's Island all the memories come flooding back. It is often said we remember what we do more than what we say or see. It may be that we want to do something together as a group to help people reflect. Of all the things that we have taken part in as Christians one of those that most stands out is the human chain we made in Birmingham as part of the 'Make Poverty History' campaign.

In the chapel of the Children's Hospital in Birmingham the team have worked hard to provide opportunities for children and families to express their feelings and prayers. There are prayer trees that change with the seasons to which people can add a leaf with a prayer or name written on. As you may imagine, Paul does many baptisms in his work at the Children's Hospital. These are more often than not at the end of life or for very ill children. When he started he became aware very quickly of the lack of ability of most of the families who asked for a baptism to express how they felt or join with understanding in any liturgy.

He first introduced the idea of using small gold hearts when a young person was dying and the large wider family, including many children, had gathered around the bedside. As about 30 members of the family gathered in a small room for a blessing of the dying young person, he offered the children an opportunity to place a small gold heart around the body of their brother, cousin, friend. What transpired was most interesting; not only did the children do this but the adults eagerly participated.

Paul has gone on to develop this and now offers a silk forget-me-not (flower) to take away as an indicator that this person will never be forgotten. If Paul conducts a funeral service or family members come back to the hospital they frequently ask for more hearts or forget-me-nots as often other family members want to share the experience and to have something that will prompt a remembrance of the loved one.

## Music

Music offers opportunities to reflect without words. It can evoke feelings and memories and may change our mood. Often we choose music that resonates with how we are feeling but we should perhaps choose music to challenge our feelings. Sally remembers while at school listening to *Danse Macabre* by Saint-Saëns and being struck by the

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strangeness of the chords. The music evoked a midnight-in-the-graveyard-type feeling; perhaps this is an example of a classical emo (a youth subculture) piece. The theme music from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* is another haunting piece of music which can make one feel almost melancholic. Listening to Fleetwood Mac's *Albatross* takes us back to the sea, which brings a different set of feelings. We all have our own examples and hearing others' choices can sometimes be surprisingly revealing.

### **Tools and exercises for reflecting without words**

There are things here we can do in five minutes as an icebreaker at the beginning of a session or some things that can become part of our lives as a regular reflection tool. Sometimes it can be helpful to have questions or topics in mind to respond to. We may have a specific issue we want to focus on but these are ones that we use regularly:

- how do I feel today?
- me as a minister or youth worker or spouse or colleague – or any other role that is significant to you . . .
- my relationship with God or spiritual journey
- places or people that are important
- a specific event in the past, present or future, for example, significant birthday, someone leaving, a bereavement
- the past, present or future in general
- an emotion that you want to understand better.

You could also reflect on a particular Bible passage such as those listed on pages 76–8.

### **Using colour to reflect**

Most of us have clear ideas on colour; we know what we like and don't like, what our 'favourite' colour is and what our first impulse is when choosing something for our house. Hieb suggests that 'Many of the attributes of colour speak to us at the level of our intuition. Colour has great emotional content and usually a long intimate history for individuals' (2005, p. 75). Cameron suggests that there is a scientific basis to our different responses to colour:

Colour, like sound is made of vibration . . . Red, yellow, blue, green, orange, purple – each vibrates at certain signature frequency. Each



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sends out a certain length of wave . . . Another, useful way to think of colour is as visible sound. When we work with colours, we are in effect building visual chords or symphonies. (Cameron, 1996, p. 123)

Hieb uses the term 'colour vocabulary' (2005, p. 107) to describe the fact that most of us attach significance to colours and observes that we can benefit from exploring this. Malchiodi suggests that we all have a 'personal visual language for expressing our emotional selves' (1998, p. 155) and that some people find colour useful in this process. She goes on to say that 'Although colour may express our thoughts, perceptions, and physical sensations, we most often associate it with emotions' (1998, p. 155).

Malchiodi offers a range of meanings for different colours as a basis to begin reflection (see Table 7.1) but does acknowledge that these meanings can appear contradictory and that our understandings of colour may be culturally determined and are also often unique to us (2005, p. 157).

**Table 7.1 Common colour associations (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 157)**

<i>Colour</i>	<i>Common associations</i>
Red	Birth, blood, fire, emotion, warmth, love, passion, wounds, anger, heat, life
Orange	Fire, harvest, warmth, energy, misfortune, alienation, assertiveness, power
Yellow	Sun, light, warmth, wisdom, intuition, hope, expectation, energy, riches, masculinity
Green	Earth, fertility, vegetation, nature, growth, cycles of renewal, envy, over-protectiveness, creativity
Blue	Sky, water, sea, heaven, spirituality, relaxation, cleansing, nourishing, calm, loyalty
Purple/Violet	Royalty, spirituality, wealth, authority, death, resurrection, imagination, attention, excitement, paranoia, persecution
Black	Darkness, emptiness, mystery, beginning, womb, unconsciousness, death, depression, loss
Brown	Fertility, soil, sorrow, roots, excrement, dirt, worthlessness, new beginnings
White	Light, virginity, purity, moon, spirituality, creation, timelessness, dreamlike, generativity, resurrection, clarity, loss, synthesis, enlightenment



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She offers the following list of questions as aids to help us to reflect on our use of colour:

- How do you use colour in your images to express emotion?
- Do certain colours have specific meanings for you?
- Are there areas of heavy uses of colour? Light uses of colour?
- Do you like to use particular combinations such as black and white; earthy, golden colours; pastels; deep, dark tones; colours found in nature? (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 158)

Hieb talks about using colour as a form of journalling; she makes suggestions as to how to respond to questions such as those listed above:

- Close or focus your eyes and move to a deeper awareness of the topic being considered.
- Visualize the colours/lines/shapes that are your response to the question.
- Go with your 'feel' for colours.
- Be in a receptive attitude.
- Look at yourself as being in dialogue with the colours.
- But try not to think too much – go with your instincts.
- Remember there is no right or wrong way to do the exercise.
- There is no specified end product.
- Usually this will take between 5 and 20 minutes.
- When you have finished reflect on what you have noticed and consider recording it (Hieb, 2005, 29–31).

Sally asked students to respond to the question: 'How do you feel at the end of your first term on the course?' using just colour. As with any activity there were mixed responses but in our experience that often relates to the predominant learning style of the student and how that correlates with the activity. At the positive end one student wrote:

I found this a very useful activity, it enabled me to express things that I would have found difficult to do so in words, either through speech or in writing. My picture shows that my feelings at the time were unclear, and mixed, which is why it is a mixture of many colours.

Another wrote 'I found this way of expressing myself really helpful' and she saw her image as very positive with colours representing inner calmness and contentment and being excited, energetic and happy. Perhaps the most negative response was one that said, 'I did not find this exercise particularly helpful, and felt that it limited my ability to express myself.'

We always need to be prepared to get such a range of responses in using reflective activities and it is often beneficial to have done them first ourselves before getting other people to do them. Using just colour to reflect can be done individually or in a group and can be part of a regular reflection process in either situation. We can illustrate our journey in colour in the same way that many of us use words.

### Collage

'When words fail me, I turn to pictures. Most specifically, I turn to collage' (Cameron, 1996, p. 116). There are many ways to do collage but often having a large pile of varied magazines, large sheets of paper, tissue paper, pens to add lines, words, etc., glue or spray mount (which is useful for repositioning as the idea changes and develops) is enough. Collage helps to answer the question 'What do you see?' As you select images, or colours or shapes, how you feel about what it is you are reflecting on begins to emerge and you can spend time making sense of what you have created. Again, this activity helps in processing, as Cameron suggests: 'because collage bypasses language, you do not need to abstract symbols into words to absorb their meanings' (1996, p. 117).

For example, a retreat facilitator suggested we might want to explore the idea of what we have lost. Going through a magazine and cutting out images and then putting them together helped us to get below the surface and identify things that wouldn't have come to mind without the visual stimuli. There was a picture of Beadnell, which is where we went for our tenth wedding anniversary, and it reinforced our commitment to celebration as a spiritual discipline which sometimes gets lost in the busy nature of everyday life.

Collages can be used corporately too; we can express what we think together through creating a collage. This can be helpful in areas such as vision-building (see Nash *et al.*, 2008). Collage can be useful for people who find drawing or painting difficult and can be good as an activity for those who do not have a lot of experience in reflecting with art as it is easy to amend and change as you go along, and looking at magazines can help as a trigger to ideas.

### Pictures

All sorts of pictures can be used for reflection. We may have our favourites or spend time wandering round galleries looking at what

resonates with us. If you walk around our house you will see a range of pictures that have meaning for us and that when we see them help us in reflection. Many are golf pictures, which remind Paul of where he has played or watched golf, but others are more symbolic. This is being written in our lounge where we have a picture of the Palace Pier in Brighton, which says fun to us. We visited it in the mad week of preparation for our wedding. It is in a place where neither of us nor our parents lived and our visit was a time to reconnect to the child in us. There is also a picture of the plant honesty in fine detail, which reminds us of the discipline of noticing, really looking and taking in what is around us.

There are many different resources available that offer different images of Christ, and these can be used in a myriad of ways to help people reflect. The last time Sally was in a group and was asked to do this she picked out a child-like drawing as that resonated with what she was feeling at that time. It was at the end of a long and busy academic year so the idea of being a child with Jesus was very attractive. Hodgson asserts that 'Images of Christ are visual iconic representations of the incarnation endowed with colour, shape, contour and movement and embedded in a story, the gospel story of Jesus' (2006, p. 9) but goes on to note that some feel that such images are in violation of the second commandment. When using pictures or other images we need to be aware of any theological or cultural issues there may be and perhaps give some time to developing and articulating a rationale for their use. She suggests that pictures of Christ are just a different way of doing theology and offers a range of ways of working with pictures.

We both enjoy the prayer chapel at Buckfast Abbey. At the end of the chapel is a stained-glass window about the size of the side of an average semi-detached house. Each time we are there something different emerges. Sally thinks of it as seeing her big Jesus; it puts us into perspective and sometimes all we do is just sit and be with Jesus. It is one of our sacred places, a thin place for us where we regularly hear God. Last time we were there what most struck Sally was that Jesus had big eyes and a small mouth and this was a reminder to take more time in seeing before speaking.

Reflecting on pictures is an accessible way of introducing the idea of reflecting without words. Some people collect postcards and other pictures (cinemas often have lots of free ones) or we can ask

people to bring one or more of their favourite pictures to share with others.

### Images and icons

Our prayer room is full of images and icons that help us reflect and make connections. Both pictures and objects can be used. For example, with a group of youth workers we used a statue of an African woman carrying a sheep around her neck. The shepherd metaphor came quickly to mind but, because it is only upon close inspection that the figure is seen to be a woman, the ideas of female imagery for God were slower to come forth. Issues of Jesus not being white were also raised. Concepts that are difficult for some to begin to deal with because of their own backgrounds or church traditions were easier to engage with through an image.

We also have Rublev's icon of the Trinity, which is an icon in the Orthodox tradition of a sacred painting which can both facilitate worship and teach us. Paul meets with a blind friend regularly and usually when they pray together Paul will give him something to hold to help connect with God; it may be, for example, a Trinitarian image, a cross with symbols on it, a chalice or a stone.

#### *For further reflection*

Use the following to trigger your own reflection:

- pruning a rose bush
- a buzzard tearing apart a rabbit
- driving out of mist into clear blue sky and sunshine.

### Lines-and-shapes exercises

Think about what it is you want to reflect on – for example, your current state of mind, such as happiness or discontentment – then draw a line on a piece of paper trying to capture the mood. If you have a variety of media to work with and draw on this can help capture your mood. You can do the same with shape also, creating a picture by repeatedly using the same shape (adapted from Barber, 2002, pp. 20–3).

### **Time-capsule collage**

This exercise can be done to reflect on periods of our life, how we feel about a specific situation, looking at the future, exploring a relationship, etc. (technique adapted from Cameron, 1996, p. 119). Take a pile of magazines, newspapers, photographs, catalogues: anything that is in your paper recycling box. Choose around 20 images that resonate with what it is you are exploring through your collage. You don't have to know why the image speaks to you; just recognize that it does at this stage. Then taking 20 minutes or so, lay the images out and add anything you want to with pens or paint, etc. You may want to put the collage somewhere you see it regularly so you can reflect on the meanings that emerge from the process and product.

### **The window**

A picture of a four-paned window can be used in a number of ways. Either draw one or print one out that you have found or created on a computer. We can then draw in each square, in the first our past, in the second the present and in the other two possible futures, what we hope for and fear. This can also be used with a group to look at the story of an organization or as part of a vision-building process. In essence, it could be used for any reflection where we want to look at four elements (adapted from Sunderland and Engleheart, 1993, pp. 22–3).

### **Mandalas**

Mandalas have been used for centuries for spiritual enlightenment across a range of religious traditions. Some of the earliest Christian ones are those of the mystic Hildegard of Bingen from the eleventh century. A mandala is an image which is created within a circle, often with a range of colours. The circle can be any size, although some think that a diameter of 250 mm (10 in.) is good as it is the size of a human head, and others think a circle within a square is good as Jung suggested that this was a representation of the self (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 127). Oil pastels work well for this but choose any media. Sometimes mixed media is effective as texture as well as colour can be significant.

- Draw a circle on a suitably sized piece of paper.
- The circle can be filled in however we like, using anything we like. It doesn't matter where we start, whether it is geometric or not,

or whether we go outside of the circle. There is no right or wrong way to draw it but for future reference it can be useful to make it clear which way up it goes. Putting a place and a date may help evoke the wider memories associated with it.

- Displaying the mandala can help get the most out of our reflection and sometimes we see something we didn't realize first time round.

Sally was on a retreat and decided she would use mandalas as her means of reflection. She worked on four over the few days there. The first explored the theme of the retreat, the second an issue from her past that still caused her concern, the third was prompted by one of the sessions and the final one was a reflection on something God had said. The series of four are now a very visual reminder of what she experienced on the retreat. Darley and Heath suggest drawing a light and dark mandala using different lead pencils and exploring things that we associate with both light and dark and integrating them into one mandala, which helps us to see how different elements can co-exist in our lives (2008, p. 153).

### **Metaphorical portraits**

This involves drawing ourselves as an object – such as a house, animal, food, tree, flower, island, building, plant, landscape, car, bird, game or place – and where appropriate add a context. We may then reflect on what we chose and why. Trigger questions include:

- What object would you like to be?
  - What object represents how you feel today?
  - What animal, etc. would you most or least like to be?
  - If you were a seed what point of growth would you be at?
- (adapted from Liebmann, 2004, pp. 228–9).

### **Life path**

Many of us will have used life graphs where we mark the ups and downs of our lives over the years. Another possibility is to imagine our life as a journey and draw or model this journey in clay using symbols as they resonate with us. This may mean a journey on a road, a landscape, a sea voyage, a trip to the moon – whatever helps us to explore and explain our life. This can be done in pairs where we explain

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our journey to each other and talk about how we felt at different stages on the journey. It is also possible, where appropriate, to ask the other person how they respond to our journey (adapted from Sunderland and Engleheart, 1993, pp. 10–11). Other adaptations include focusing on one section of our life; working on one facet, such as vocation or family; having sections for past, present and future; and drawing a maze, spiral, map or cartoon strip (Liebmann, 2004, p. 230).

### **Trunks and dustbins**

We often have two sorts of difficult experiences and emotions. Some we want to discard and hopefully never see again; and some we don't feel able to deal with now, or we are aware of but not to the extent that we feel we want to deal with them. The first set of emotions needs to go in the dustbin and the second in a trunk so that we can access them when we are ready or when we need to. Draw a picture of both and representations of what needs to go in them (adapted from Liebmann, 2004, p. 236).

### **Letting go with clay**

In this exercise we think about something we would like to let go of and then fashion it in clay; it may be something either concrete or abstract. We can then decide if we would like to destroy what we have created, or throw it away, or make some other symbolic act that helps us to let go of something, such as giving it to someone else, burying it, pouring water over it to symbolize cleansing (adapted from Darley and Heath, 2008, p. 151).

### **Photographs**

Taking photos is another way in which reflection without words can be expressed. With the capacity today to download pictures onto our computers rather than pay to have them printed out there are endless opportunities for capturing moments for future reflection.

## **Conclusion**

We regularly introduce activities where people can reflect without words, such as those mentioned above, into quiet days, teaching sessions and church-based groups. However, in contexts where people



are not familiar with such activities we will usually have them as options with other more familiar word-based activities such as reading a Bible passage and answering some questions or writing a prayer or just sitting and reflecting quietly. We would then have a period of feedback at the end of an exercise. Often people are encouraged into trying such activities by the experience of others who share in such a way that newcomers want to have a go next time.

Another approach is for us to tell a story or to have asked someone else to be willing to share at the beginning of the day or session to help people understand that what is important is the process and what you learn from doing something rather than the 'quality' of the product. We also always set ground rules which make it clear that people can choose whether or not they share and that they will never be put on the spot. If you want to consider introducing such activities then it is worth collecting a range of materials including:

- paper in different sizes and colours including on a roll
- oil pastels, pencils, charcoal, felt tips and marker pens
- paints – children's squeeze bottle-type paints work well – paint brushes, palettes, jars for water
- plastic cloths or decorating sheets to protect furniture or the carpet
- glue and spray mount
- collage materials, which can be anything, for example, pulses, small buttons, sequins, old magazines, wool or tissue paper.

Bargain bookshops often have such materials on sale quite cheaply. For a group completely new to such activities we would start with simple exercises like reflecting on pictures or music, and then perhaps do a simple colour exercise where participants respond to a less personal topic such as 'the state of our nation' or 'our community'

before asking people to engage with something that requires personal disclosure at any level.

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often enables us to access the parts of us that other forms of reflection don't reach. It can help us connect at an emotional level and explore what is going

**?** *How does your reflection give you opportunity to engage with and process your feelings? Are there additional tools you need to add?*

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on in our lives at greater depth. This is perhaps why some of the ways of reflecting outlined here evoke a strong reaction. Chapter 6 on observing culture and the awareness nature walks from Chapter 8 obviously connect with the ideas in this chapter as very accessible ways of not using words for reflection.