

# Distilled Theology Indy

The Thirsty Scholar  
Indianapolis, IN

# Vision of Ministry

- An opportunity for theological conversation
- Outside the church
- With diversity in participation
- But not a replacement for church
  
- Inspiration came from the Brethren community  
Matthew McKimmey – “Distilled Theology”  
and the Catholic group, “Theology on Tap”

# Program

- Meets 1x a month, 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of month
- In a local bar “The Thirsty Scholar”
- Family style seating about tables
- Lasts 1-3 hours
- No cost to attend
- No preparation necessary

# Distilled Theology



# Communications

- Facebook page “Distilled Theology”
- “Indy Star” – local newspaper article
- Church announcements
- Weekly church bulletins
- Word of mouth

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# Faith Traditions

- Mostly All Saints Episcopal Church
- Other Episcopal churches
- Methodist, Presbyterian



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# Participants

- Leaders in the church
  - Vestry, Stewardship, former Search committee
- Active in the church (multiple activities)
- Demographically mixed:
  - Male/Female
  - Age: 30-70 years
  - Mostly single
  - Caucasian

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# Discussion Preparation

- The leader picks a topic or theme in advance
- Topic is announced on Facebook
- Adds a few quotes or pictures

# Discussion Participation

- On Tuesday, the leader brings a handout
- Gives a short theological/historical background
- Free-form discussion follows
- All encouraged to participate
- Usually starts as intellectual discussion
- Usually moves into experiential conversation
- Sometimes the leader would offer continued reading (books and articles)

# Topic: JOY

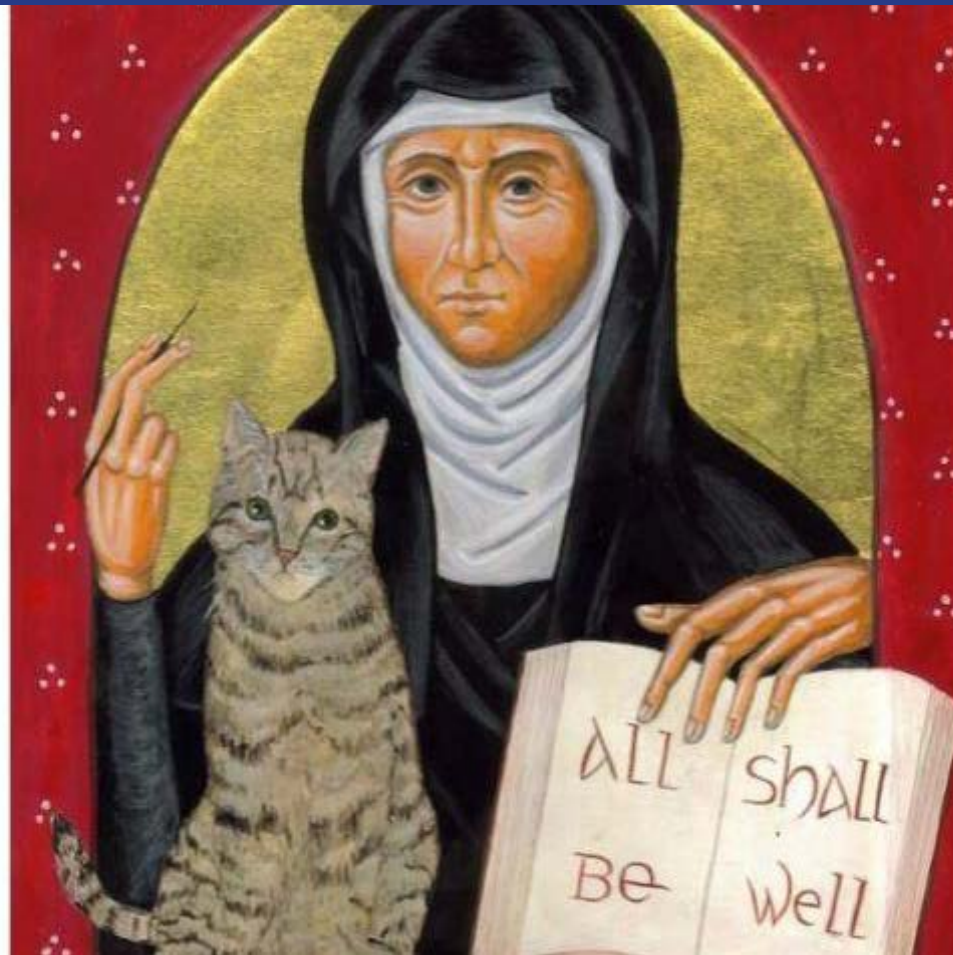
- “To get the full value of joy,  
you must have someone to divide it with.”  
Mark Twain
- Joy is the serious business of heaven.”  
C.S. Lewis

# Topic: FEAR

- “The enemy is fear.  
We think it is hate; but it is fear.”  
Gandhi
- “There is no fear in love.  
Perfect love drives out fear...the one  
who fears is not made perfect in love.”  
1 John 4:18

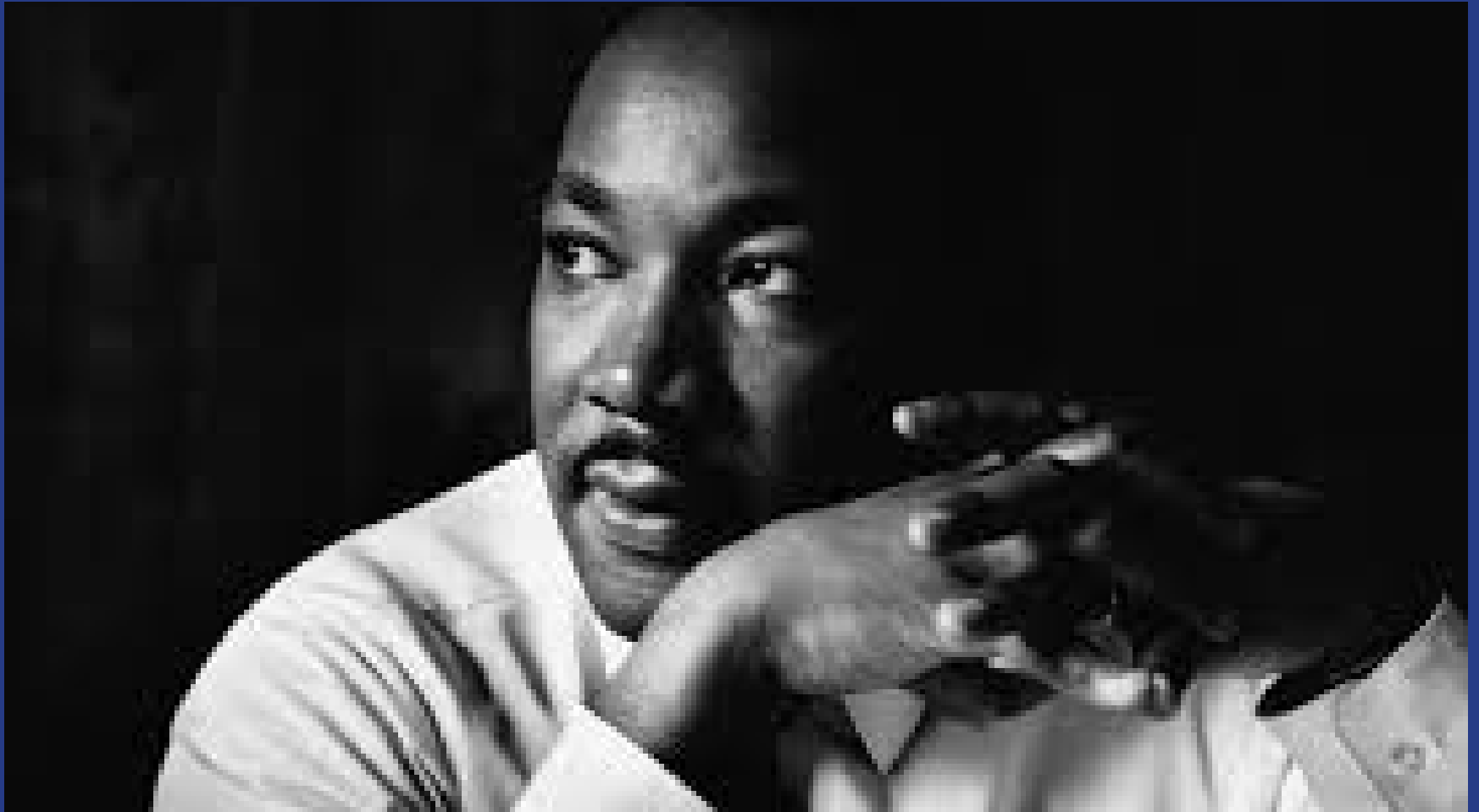


Can you guess this topic?



# LOVE:

“I have decided to stick with love.  
Hate is too great a burden to bear.”



# HOPE

- “Hope is the thing with feathers –  
that perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without words –  
and never stops at all”

Emily Dickinson

# What I liked (participants' views)

- Focus on a single theological theme
- Deep exploration
- Various view points represented
- Brings focus and flexibility
- Ask questions. Raise doubts.
- Lets the mind grapple with something

# What I liked

- To hear other people's ideas and perspectives
- To hear a completely new perspective
- To have experts in the group

# What I liked

- Everyone participates
- People feed off one another
- There's a quality of listening (You are heard)
- No one dominates



# What like

- Being challenged
- Being affirmed
- Being on our own
- Can go deeply

# What like

- Fellowship – fun to be with people
- Community
- Bonding
- Kinship
- A gathering of fellow believers
- An anchor point

# What I like!



# Value over normal faith experience?

- Episcopalians have tradition, ritual, liturgy in worship
- Can't hit "pause" button to explore deeply
- Provides forum for faith discussion

# Meets These Spiritual Needs

- To probe deeper than normal church service
- To provide meaning to life
- To explore one's spiritual life
- To form community
- To be with people with similar beliefs
- To be with people who challenge beliefs
- To contribute to the common good

# Surprises

- Not attended by a young people. Why?
- Lack of opportunity for deep conversation within the church. Is this an opportunity for a change in liturgy or educational programs offered.
- An affordable model of ministry. How would it change if the leader was compensated?



# Insights/Musings

- Is part of the value of the experience that it helps take faith out of the church building and into the community?
  - They publically prayed together one night.
  - Comments about needing more outreach in their congregation. They used to be known for their outreach.

# Their Words

- “Someone speaks and you think ‘Wow! I never looked at it that way!’”
- “It was life changing. [The discussion] sent me down a road I had never expected.”

# Their Words

- “I was afraid it would be ‘chit chat’, ‘deadly dull’ but it’s a group conversation. I have to go to that!”
- “One of the most enjoyable fulfilling things we do!”

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