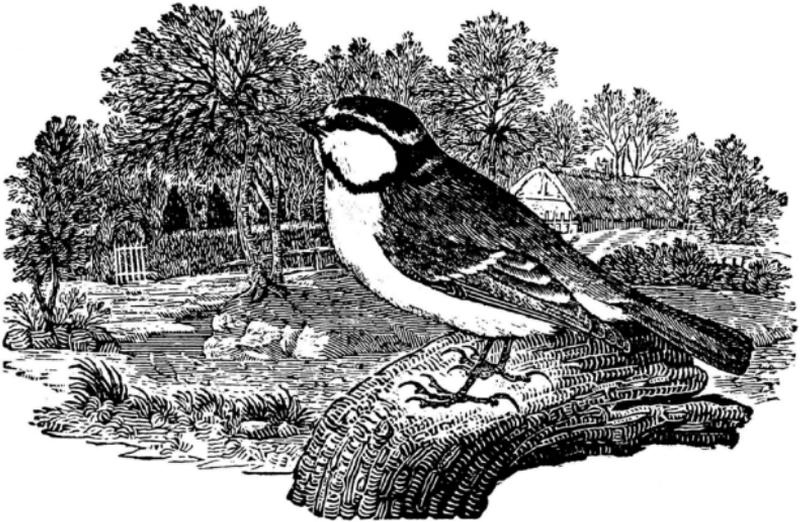


Bird Sheet



A range of entirely optional Mid-faith Crisis wiffly activities to engage with during our time together (or indeed sometime after).

What's here? (Part 1)

Paying attention to the world around us.

Just stop for a moment. Sit, or stand still. Close your eyes. Now **Ask yourself 'what's here?'** What can you hear, smell, feel? Start just by being aware of your own body - your breathing, your stance, maybe even the odd ache and pain. Now move out. Listen to the birdsong. Smell the sea. Feel the ground beneath your feet (or even the rain on your face!) Pay attention to your senses as you are out in the open today. In what ways is God speaking to you through this? Are you thankful? Joyful? Or just wet?

What's here? (Part 2)

Paying attention to the world within us.

We're going to bring to the conscious level what's going on in our inner life. **Ask yourself 'what's here?'** What have you brought with you? What has suddenly appeared? What are you feeling? What are you worried about? What are you grateful for? Try to name all the emotions you are experiencing at this time. Breathe. God is near. This process is your prayer. *(There's a written version of this but you can't do that on a bird reserve)*

Learning to Look

Looking at something by drawing

Focus on something small – a stone, a bit of wood, a leaf, an insect. Really study it. Notice its markings, its structure, how it is put together. **Now draw it.** Don't worry about getting it right – this is not an art competition. It's an exercise in looking. Spend five or ten minutes drawing it. What did you discover? What did you see? Tell someone.

Welcome the visitor (Part 1)

Listening out for what God is saying

Be alert for the unexpected. Maybe a hawk swooping overhead., or an animal crossing your tracks. Maybe it is a bird that you've been wanting to spot. These are visitors from the world around us **What happens if you treat this as a message?** Or a metaphor? What if God was trying to tell you something through this?

Welcoming the visitor (Part 2)

Learning to be OK with crappy stuff

Look around you for something unpleasant. I don't mean the other people, I mean stuff like animal crap, or smelly algae, or a wasp. Or rain. Something you would rather wasn't here. **Now welcome the visitor.** Look at it. Try to see its qualities, not just its negatives. After you have looked for a while, pray a blessing on it. Thank God for it. Whatever it is - it plays a part in creation. Welcome it, bless it, and let it be.

Welcoming the visitor (Part 3)

Learning to be OK with different crappy stuff

Think about something in your life that you wish wasn't there. Maybe a hurt or an offence. Remember the feelings you experienced with this hurt – you might feel them even now. **Now welcome the visitor.** Stop fighting it or rejecting it. Just name it, and let it sit there for a while. It's hard, but when we name it, feel it, and welcome it, transformation can begin. Try not to analyse it. After a bit, hand this visitor over to God. Maybe ask God to bless the person who hurt you. Whatever it is - it has played a part in your journey. Welcome it, bless it, and let it go.

Letting go

Letting go of our burdens

Find a stone. Look at it. It's been here a long time - it reminds us how temporary our stay is. Now, bring to mind something you would like to 'let go' of today. Maybe an anxiety, an emotion, something that is weighing on you. 'Place' all those thoughts and feelings into the stone. When you are ready, walk with your stone to the sea and, facing out to sea, cast your stone away. **As you do so, ask God to help you let go emotionally and spiritually.** Then, as you turn and walk away from the sea, remember you are entering a new place where you no longer carry the burden. The stone has been cast away.

Go on a very short, epic journey

Another way of noticing

Go on a very small but epic voyage. First, give yourself an adventurer name. You might be Nick the Grumpy, or Joe the Bald. Then work out where you are going to go. Now you have your title, e.g. 'Nick the Grumpy's journey from one end of the bench to the other and what he found there'. **Now you have to go on that journey.** Move slowly, notice absolutely everything that you can. (You can always write it down.) At the end, think about what you have discovered.

This is the treasure you have to bring back from your voyage.

Somebody's Breastplate

Forging your own 'breastplate' prayer

The famous prayer known as 'St Patrick's Breastplate' contains a section that goes:

*I bind unto myself today
The virtues of the star lit heaven,
The glorious sun's life giving ray...
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
The stable earth, the deep salt sea, etc.*

As you walk, why not form your own prayer using this pattern? Find something that inspires you, something with a quality or an attribute. **Use these to make your own breastplate prayer.** For example

*Spirit of Christ
I bind unto myself today,
The life of new grown leaves,
The stillness of the woods,
The freedom of the birds,
The endurance of the oak, etc.*