

Appleseed

Appleseed is a process that enables thinking and feeling to work together so that space can be made for the Spirit to be experienced and grow within. There are three stages in any Appleseed practice.

Stage one: input

First of all there is some input related to the theme, which could be in words, prose or poetry, pictures or other visual material, or music. This input usually takes about half an hour at a led Appleseed event. You could experiment with different members of your worship group preparing the input for a group session, or you could use images, poetry or music from books, recordings or the internet.

Stage two: response activities

The input is followed by a 'response activity', a very simple, arts-based exercise that gives time and space for colour and shapes to emerge and for new discoveries to be made. This stage lasts approximately three quarters of an hour.

Here are details of three different kinds of response activity. More response options are detailed in the Appleseed workbook (see *Find out more*).

Spontaneous painting

This kind of painting is called 'spontaneous' to distinguish it from landscapes, still lifes or portraits, for example. The aim is to paint not what is 'out there' but what is 'in here'. You are invited to take an inward journey and to express it in colour, shape and texture.

1. Begin by wetting your paper on both sides, using a sponge.
2. Paint for one minute using both hands and with your eyes closed to enable you to let go and work in freedom.
3. Once the minute is up, open your eyes. You now have the opportunity to continue to develop your work in various ways, but there is no pressure to do so. For example, you could add further brush strokes or colours.

Note: It is best to use watercolour or gouache paints and good quality watercolour paper such as Bockingford.

Word collage

This is an exercise in paying full attention to a word or phrase and exploring its meaning in a new way. You will make a collage composed entirely of letters and not of symbols or pictures. But you can interpret letter shapes very freely and arrange them in any order.

1. In the silence at the beginning, allow a word or short phrase, usually from the theme of the session, to come to mind.
2. Collect paper from a selection previously laid out; one sheet will be for your base paper, and others will be needed for your individual letters.
3. Tear the letters from any of the papers you have collected. Never use scissors, as they allow too much control. Tearing the paper involves both hands and releases creativity.
4. Do not glue the letters down until the end, as changes of mind about colours or arrangement often happen late in the process and can be very revealing.

Postcards

Images are part of our everyday lives; they delight or frighten us, remind us or make us sad. But images can be precious learning points; they have been described as the language of the soul and can help us to discern where the Spirit is in our lives, and where we are being guided on our journey. By using a large number and great variety of postcards and photographs, it is possible to simulate the profusion of images we encounter in our lives and which flicker through our minds.

1. You begin this process by being given a word or concept that relates to the theme, for example my journey, my difficult place, my hope.
2. You then browse among the cards, letting one or two of them 'choose you'. There will be only ten minutes to do this, in order to encourage spontaneity.
3. After choosing there will be fifteen minutes to write about your cards. You can offer optional guidelines or queries to help people with this task.

Stage three: worship sharing

This is an opportunity to share the experience of the response activity, or indeed the whole session, including the input. Worship sharing is used because it gives a protected space for participants to share as much, or as little, as they want; they draw their own parameters. They are protected from invasive questioning of their work, or what they say about it. Also important is that the process can take people into new discoveries about what their work is telling them.

Find out more

- Cook, Chris and Brenda Heales. *Images and Silence: 1992 Swarthmore Lecture*. Quaker Books, 1992.
- Cook, Chris and Brenda Heales. *Seeding the Spirit: the Appleseed workbook*. Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2001.