

Deep Abiding Prayer – Praying, Living and Loving from the Inside Out a brief introduction



St Clare of Assisi

Deep Abiding Prayer (DAP) approaches contemplative prayer of the heart as a spiritual practice occurring in silence, and also as an awareness and a way of being while in the midst of everyday life activities and encounters. The heart is seen as the seat of compassion.

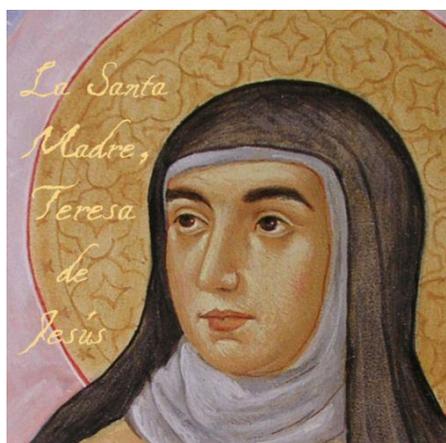
The DAP programme was created not only for participants' healing, inner peace, and empowerment amid their overstretched lives. It also aimed to embody an engaged citizenship, moral courage, civic and social responsibility. The programme also aimed to reclaim the original purpose of many contemplative spiritual traditions: to help awaken awareness of life's inter-connective oneness; and to live, love, lead, and serve as instruments of healing peace, but without seeking to be perfect.

There have been many names for Divine indwelling, or Spirit. In the Judeo Christian heritage these names include *ruach* in the Hebrew Scriptures, *pneuma* and *energon* in Paul's epistles, and Holy Spirit or third member of the Trinity. Contemplative sources such as Teresa of Avila and Clare of Assisi speak of being in-dwelt, of tapping into this inner force or Spirit in order to serve, to lead, and face the demands of daily life.

DAP can be used as a way of asking that a community or individual people be held within the presence of the Holy Spirit and for healing. Importantly, we do this without assuming that we know what outcome will take place or is desirable, so that we trust in the action of the Holy Spirit and the mysterious life force of the divine. Where there is no cure for conditions, there can still be healing. We let go – implicitly saying “your will be done.”

An inner gesture of surrender and awareness —like a radio dial inside us – tunes us to the deep abiding presence and healing action of the indwelling Spirit if we are open to it. It is the same eternal life force of the universe dwelling in, yet also beyond, all beings that connects all life as one. Participants in the DAP groups found that the gesture of surrender to the indwelling Spirit helped them to act more skilfully and compassionately when confronted with emotions such as fear, sadness and anger in response to the demands, discomforts, and difficulties of life.

As co-participants in the Incarnation we are required to live from an awareness of the indwelling Word of God rooted within us. In this form of prayer we let go of the impossible task of trying to be perfect before we perceive ourselves as acceptable and beloved by God. Participants in DAP are in communion not only with the indwelling Spirit but also with all who have ever shared the struggles and forms of poverty they, their loved ones, and others have known.



St Teresa of Avila who developed the contemplative prayer of the heart

DAP was developed by Catherine Quehl-Engel, Episcopalian Chaplain at Cornell University in the USA. With Catherine's permission we have adapted this form of prayer for our own setting in the UK. Some of the language and imagery is slightly different from the original form for this reason. I have been praying this prayer, very imperfectly, for a number of years twice a week. This form of prayer works particularly well when a group of people agree to meet regularly to practise the prayer together, and to pray for particular people and communities.

We are offering **an introductory Zoom course** in **Deep Abiding Prayer** from 14 September to 12 October 2021 (7.30 – 8.30 pm). This will be for members of St James's and subscribers to Living Spirituality Connections. Please email petragriffiths@livingspirit.org.uk for details of the course and to book.

The stages of the prayer and the sources and influences on the UK form of DAP are listed overleaf.

Sources for Deep Abiding Prayer of the Heart and for the adapted version of it in use here:

The dissertation by Catherine-Quehl-Engel, presented at Washington Theological Union, about the study into this form of prayer can be read here:

<https://www.heartmath.org/assets/uploads/2015/01/deep-abiding.pdf>

Other sources for this newly adapted form of the prayer are:

Larry Dossey M.D.'s book *Healing Words: The power of prayer and the practice of medicine*.

Professor **Alastair Cunningham's Healing Journey Program** developed at Princess Margaret Cancer Center, Toronto.

The **Heartmath Institute** who conduct scientific research into the importance of the heart as a physical organ and into its spiritual qualities. "Adding heart is especially about practicing kindness and compassion, along with forgiveness..."

<https://www.heartmath.org/>

THE STEPS OF DEEP ABIDING PRAYER OF THE HEART

1: HEART FOCUS & HEART BREATHING

2. HEART FEELING

3. LETTING GO OF ANYTHING WITHIN YOU THAT IS A BARRIER

4. LETTING GO INTO A SURRENDERED, SOFTENED, OPENED, AND HUMBLE HEART

5. SENDING HEALING AND COMPASSIONATE INTENTION TO YOURSELF AND TO THE INTENDED RECIPIENTS OF THE PRAYER

6. RETURNING TO YOUR ROOTED SENSE OF SELF AND OFFERING GRATITUDE.