

## **Spirituality and Social Justice: The Perfect Union**

At first glance, my dual passions of spirituality and social justice may seem a little disconnected. Surely they are two completely different areas with different ways of seeing the world. And I used to think that too, and kept them both quite separate. But as I reflect upon my unique position of finishing off a Masters in Spiritual Direction and sitting on the executive on the Churches of Christ Social Justice Network, it strikes me as a perfect union. Spirituality invites us to see God in the ordinary and everyday events of our lives. As we take the time for prayerful quiet and meditation we begin to marvel at the way in which God manifests himself/herself in the world around us: In the kindness of friends and strangers, in the life-giving decisions that people make in the events of our lives as they unfold.

God's love plays out in the gentle ministry of Spiritual Direction. We journey with another by providing a sacred space in which people feel valued and honoured. This involves the director or guide listening carefully to the pilgrim reflecting prayerfully on his/her life. In this process, both pilgrim and guide seek to pay attention to the presence of God in the pilgrim's life. Both are 'co-discerners' – noticing the ways he/she responds to God and the way he/she resists God. I have seen the healing that can come from this ministry.

Within spirituality there is a journey inward and downward, where we explore our relationship with God and sit with the sometimes overwhelming question of who God has called me to be. Then there is also the journey outward, in the relationships we have with others. I don't think there can be one without the other. By just taking the journey inwards, there is a danger that we become bogged down in 'me-ness' and introspection. Just taking the journey out can be shallow and baseless if it is not grounded in our faith and *raison d'être*. I believe to search for wholeness means we must attend to both.

In Social Justice, God's love plays out in activism. It is in the process of looking at world situations and questioning if there may be a better way. Jesus' ministry showed us a powerful model for looking after those people on the fringes of our society and finding ways to bring healing, compassion and inclusiveness. There are many examples in the Gospels, of Jesus taking time to recharge, rest and reflect before he returned to the crowds and those that asked for healing. In Mark's Gospel (6:45) he "went to the mountain to pray"

There are a few similarities between these ministries that I have found. Both are slow, hard work. They both require a faith that healing can emerge. There are times in both where I lose heart and ponder why I have not perhaps found easier vocations. I see both ministries as central to my search for wholeness. There is a challenge for all of us to find our own path, and to discern who God may be calling us to be.

– Kristen Hobby, September 2005