

Chaplaincy

Many YMCAs have a Chaplaincy service, which supports staff and service users to think through life's Big Questions. Often the daily pressures arising from relationships, money, personal and other expectations can seem suffocating, or life becomes so hectic that little time is spent considering spiritual health.

YMCA Chaplaincy provides a non-judgmental space to discuss, explore, pray, worship and generally unpack life's journey from a supportive Christian perspective.

YMCA ENGLAND & WALES

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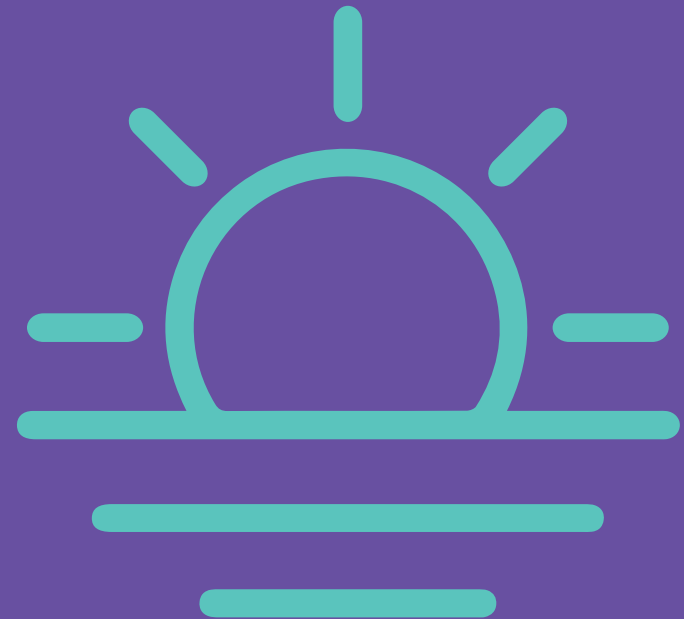
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YMCA

YMCA Book of Inspirations



YMCA

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

May the blessing of light be on you -
light without and light within. May the
blessed sunlight shine on you like a great
peat fire, so that stranger and friend
may come and warm himself at it.

Scottish Blessing

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We all benefit from a bit of Inspiration!

Sometimes it's good to reach beyond yourself. When facing a difficult challenge, having a bad moment, in need of divine guidance or when you're just not looking forward to the day ahead.

This booklet contains stories, poems, songs, bible passages and prayers that have for different reasons been a source of inspiration for 20 YMCA people, young and old, across the UK and beyond.

Understanding how others have been inspired, can also help us to reach out to connect with Creator God (who knows exactly how we tick) and invite him to be a present part of our day.

If you have a Christian passage that is special to you, please share it with us for future YMCA Books of Inspiration.

We hope that you will use this booklet to stop, think, and give time for your Creator to be a present part of your day ... and that through this encounter, you too will find inspiration.

YMCA Chaplaincy



Up until this point I was on a journey with my faith where I was questioning what it all meant, and what if anything it meant to me and my life.

This was one of the worship songs we sang (at Youth Unify) and the first time I can say with 100% certainty that I felt the Holy Spirit flow through me. That was the very moment when I just knew without a doubt that I was on the right path.

A YMCA Support Worker, Midlands, England
(and former YMCA resident)

Here I am
Down on my knees again
Surrendering all
Surrendering all

Find me here
Lord as You draw me near
Desperate for You
Desperate for You

I surrender

Drench my soul
As mercy and grace unfold
I hunger and thirst
I hunger and thirst

With arms stretched wide
I know You hear my cry
Speak to me now
Speak to me now

I surrender
I surrender
I wanna know You more
I wanna know You more

Like a rushing wind
Jesus breathe within
Lord have Your way
Lord have Your way in me

Like a mighty storm
Stir within my soul
Lord have Your way
Lord have Your way in me

Like a rushing wind
Jesus breathe within
Lord have Your way
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Lord have Your way
Lord have Your way in me

Lord have Your way
Lord have Your way in me

I surrender
I surrender
I wanna know You more
I wanna know You more

I Surrender
Matt Crocker

I Surrender. Words and Music by Matt Crocker
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This Psalm is often read at weddings and funerals.

I find these words can echo our own deep longing for God particularly during times of change when we feel the need for peace, reassurance and comfort. For some of us these words may be familiar, and might remind us of a grandparent, school or Church.

Reading this Psalm carefully and slowly as a prayer connects me with something eternal that is beyond myself. The Psalm reminds me of the eternal Christian truth that whatever our circumstances we belong to God who is love, and that God is with us.

A YMCA Chaplain, England

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all
the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23

The Bible

*Psalm 23 A Psalm of David. Scripture taken from the
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When I found that my mental state couldn't keep up with the demands on my time, and I became swamped by events that I couldn't control - the macho saying "when the going gets tough, the tough get going", just didn't do it for me anymore.

Visualising the picture that David Adam describes in "In This Frail Craft," was like pouring healing balm into my situation.

A YMCA CEO, Central Region, England

Picture the disciples in their boat. The day started off well: there were crowds of people clamouring to see Jesus, bringing their troubles for His healing, their anxieties for his calming. The sky was blue and the water like a mill pond. Everything in the world seemed lovely. A good day to be alive. They moved from the crowds and on to the sea. They are tired after a busy day, everyone wants a rest. A gentle rocking of the boat and lapping of the waters soon have them all resting. Jesus is now asleep in the boat.

What happens next takes them all by surprise, even the seasoned fishermen. A storm hits the boat. Great winds have come from nowhere. The waves rise and dark clouds lower. At first it is just spray that prevents them from seeing clearly, then great waves beat against and enter their boat. They are being driven further and further from the shore and from the area that they know so well. They are alone and so small, the sea so large. They are so frail, the waves so mighty and strong. Soon they will be overwhelmed: soon they will perish. Meanwhile, Jesus sleeps in the boat.

Yet Jesus is there. He has not saved them from the storm. He is there with them in the storm and this will not be the last time. He is there to be called upon. There to be awakened. Yet the disciples try everything they can – to no avail. Soon, it seems, human frailty will be swamped – so they cry out, 'Lord save us, we are perishing!' It will not be the last time they feel like this. The storm is raging about them, they and their vessel are so fragile. Jesus then awakens. He stands amidst the wind and waves, He is there in the storms of life, and He says, 'Peace, be still,' He stills the noise of the waves, the raging of the wind, and the mounting fears of the disciples. They may now be entering a strange country, but they have a new found peace; for a little while all around them is calm. They are still learning that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that we should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

In This Frail Craft

David Adam

Extract from, David Adam, "In This Frail Craft" in, Tides and Seasons: Modern Prayers in the Celtic Tradition, London: SPCK, 2010, 97-98. Used with permission.



I first heard this song at the European Unify leaders conference hosted in Aberfeldy, Scotland. Working for an organisation with a specific Christian ethos was new to me. I had been reflecting and praying on how my approach to work might, or even should change.

The song, sung so beautifully in a lowland Scottish accent, reminded me of the simple, yet profound, nature of our relationship with God. As my journey with the YMCA continues and develops and complexities abound, I'm drawn to the truths expressed in the lyrics and its reminder too of the warm Scottish welcome.

A YMCA Senior Manager, England

Oh, I've heard a thousand stories of what they think you're like. But I've heard the tender whispers of love in the dead of night. And you tell me that you're pleased And that I'm never alone

You're a Good, Good Father.
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are. And I'm loved by you It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am.

Oh, and I've seen many searching for answers far and wide. But I know we're all searching for answers only you provide. 'Cause you know just what we need. Before we say a word

You're a Good, Good Father It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are. And I'm loved by you. It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

'cause you are perfect in all of your ways. You are perfect in all of your ways. You are perfect in all of your ways to us

You are perfect in all of your ways. You are perfect in all of your ways. You are perfect in all of your ways to us

Oh, it's love so undeniable.
I, I can hardly speak. Peace so unexplainable I, I can hardly think.

As you call me deeper still Into love, love, love

You're a Good, Good Father. It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are. And I'm loved by you It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am.

You're a Good, Good Father. It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are. And I'm loved by you

It's who I am, it's who I am it's who I am

Good Good Father

Pat Barrett and Anthony Brown

Extract taken from the song 'Good Good Father' by Pat Barrett and Anthony Brown.

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We gathered together in Germany in July 2016. Christians from over 200 Communities, Movements and YMCAs from across Europe, from diverse backgrounds. The Conference, 'Together for Europe' was coincidentally the weekend after the British people voted for Brexit, for leaving the EU. As we prayed for unity and reconciliation, Bishops and cardinals from different church traditions hugged, the national television reported on the meeting, and I realised... We have a choice...

...Amongst a world full of selfishness, hostility, fear and uncertainty, our Lord Jesus, who defeated death and evil, is present. And we as his people are called to set an example for unity and love and reconciliation.

A YMCA Board Member, Germany

There is no alternative to being together

"United in diversity". This European hope is more than ever relevant. Europe must not become a fortress and build new frontiers. There is no alternative to being together. Being together in reconciled diversity is possible.

The Gospel - A Source of Hope

Jesus Christ prayed for unity and gave his life for it. This is stated in the Gospel, which for almost 2,000 years has played a key role in the culture of Europe. Jesus Christ teaches us boundless love for all people. He shows us the path of mercy and reconciliation. We can ask forgiveness and forgive one another. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a powerful source from which we can draw hope for the future.

Europe - A Culture of Respect & Esteem

The terrible experiences of two World Wars have taught us that peace is a precious gift that we must preserve. Our future must be characterised by a culture of respect and esteem for others, even for strangers.

Unity is possible - Overcoming Divisions

We ask all Christians, especially Church leaders, to overcome the divisions. These have caused suffering, violence and injustice, and have undermined the credibility of the Gospel. As Christians we want to live together as people who are reconciled and in full communion.

Our Commitment

- We live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and bear witness to it with our words and deeds.
- We are pursuing the path of reconciliation and working to enable our communities, Churches, peoples and cultures to live "unity in diversity".
- We meet people of different beliefs and faiths with respect, seeking dialogue with them.
- We are committed to building up humanity and peace in the world.
- We have a vision for Europe being together in a way that is stronger than fear or selfishness.
- We place our trust in the Holy Spirit who continually renews and gives life to the world.

Concluding Message

Together for Europe Conference
July 2016

Used with Permission. Together for Europe: Encounter, Reconciliation, Future. Munich (Bavaria), 2nd July 2016: Concluding Message.
www.together4europe.org



The words were said more than 2500 years ago...

But they are still encouraging. God has the power to restore!

In the Bible, “Heart” is the centre for physical AND emotional-intellectual-moral activities.

A heart of stone doesn’t understand God’s word, BUT God wants that His people can keep in touch with him. With a new heart and spirit, this is possible. A restored person can listen to God and act.

The best part of it: It’s a GIFT, one can’t earn the new heart or spirit!

A YMCA Youth Worker, Switzerland

How God works...

“I’ll pour pure water over you and scrub you clean. I’ll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I’ll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that’s God-willed, not self-willed. I’ll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands.” (The Message)

Ezekiel 36:c.25-27

The Bible

Ezekiel 36: c.25-27 The Bible. THE MESSAGE Version. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from THE MESSAGE, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



I find it so easy to get wrapped up in the busyness of life and try and do everything in my own strength. I'm even finding myself trying, in my own strength, to be clever with this devotion! Yet God says, 'Stop, be still; I will fight for you. I will sort out your problems. Just give me a chance.'

A YMCA Project Manager, North England

The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.

Exodus 14:14

The Bible

Exodus 14: 14. Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ©. NIV®. COPYRIGHT © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



I draw a lot of strength and inspiration from poetry. In its purest form, poetry can be the voice of a feeling you've never known how to say in your own words. With this poem, cummings captures in simple (but jumbled, unordered, gushing) language the awe that he sees in nature and the connection that gives us to the "unimaginable You", God. I have a copy of this pinned above my desk and I look at it nearly every day when I feel lost or in need of encouragement.

A YMCA Fundraiser, England

i thank You God

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any - lifted from the no
of all nothing - human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

e. e. cummings

"i thank You God for most this amazing". Copyright 1950, (c) 1978, 1991 by the Trustees for the E.E. Cummings Trust. Copyright (c) 1979 by George James Firmage, from COMPLETE POEMS: 1904-1962 by E.E. Cummings, edited by George J. Firmage. Used by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.



I was walking through a forest in Cambodia when I had an experience with Jesus. I felt as if He was walking next to me and inviting me to walk hand in hand. I had the impression that He was saying that often we can want to break hands and run ahead (in our minds) to the future but we can't yet see how He will intervene – so can get anxious or worried, or we can lag behind in our regrets and mistakes of the past – but again we need to break company with Him in order to dwell there . He assured me that He is I AM, the God of the present moment – and that if I take time daily to walk with Him, and communicate with Him, and share my 'load', in the here and now, I will learn the 'unforced rhythms of grace' and will learn to live 'freely and lightly'. In this set up He carries our daily 'load' of concerns and 'to do's' and works through them with us one thing at a time as we keep in step with Him.

At a conference in Kidderminster my eye fell on a painting which was very similar to my walk in Cambodia. "Its called 'Pacemaker' " the artist explained. She said, Jesus had reminded her that He wants us to enjoy the present with Him and let Him set the pace – rather than rushing off ahead and being pre-occupied with the future. Wow! I bought the painting and have begun slowing my life down to keep pace with Him a bit more – it's amazing how much more you see, hear and experience around you when you slow down - it's so worth it!!

A YMCA Well-being Worker, England

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?”

Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”
(The Message)

Matthew 11:28-30

The Bible

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Having seen the production twice in different settings I was a little surprised to realise that the inspiration for me came from the very start of the production, and at the end.

The first performance was at a “Unify” conference, but the second was with staff and colleagues from my local YMCA.

The performance made me reflect on my colleagues around me. It made me realise that we are all more than our roles within the YMCA, and how the YMCA movement should be ensuring that all our staff and volunteers are recognised, valued, respected, inspired, motivated and developed.

So inspired... my personal commitment is to ensure that ALL my colleagues are reminded:

...you are more, you can be more, you are not alone.

A YMCA Theatre Goer, England

(In this scene, George is reminiscing on his life's work in conversation with a Journalist, Miss Davies)

Davies: ...Can you help me understand why the YMCA grew so fast? I still can't comprehend that.

George: That's precisely what I've been trying to tell you.

Davies: You told me about railways! By that argument any idea would have spread and we both know that's nonsense. There must have been something, something in the basic fabric of the idea.

George: It spread because there was a spiritual hunger for God Miss Davies, I'm sorry to state that so plainly but there it is. Now if you don't believe that could possibly happen, then you will struggle with this story. But ... if you want to try to put it in more humanist terms then try this ...

...We are more than bodies to be fed to a machine. We are made for more than work. We have minds that must be fed, bodies that must be cared for and we also have souls, we have spirits and somewhere in this dead city there must be a place where those things are nurtured and if men will not go to the churches or chapels or if the churches and chapels cease to feed our souls then there must be somewhere else.

Davies: And that's what the Associations were?

George: It's what they are.

Davies: Thank you. You've been very generous... ..Be honest, for all you've said of progress - as you look into the future, it's brighter than today, isn't it?

(During the following the lights flicker and we hear the rumble of distant explosions as though the World Wars were coming)

George: Perhaps... perhaps we are on the brink of a great gleaming age, of peace progress and learning. Maybe Christ himself will return. But... there is a dark side to progress and this Machine-age has a dark soul. In my bleaker moments I fear that men - and women too - will spend more and more of their days in toil, working at machines, isolated from each other, cut off from God. I fear the future will be a lonely place, that Christ will be forgotten ...and then I pray.

And when I think of the Association ...I pray that whatever changes, whatever stays the same - we will always say this ...

...you are more, you can be more, you are not alone.

Soul in the Machine

Saltmine Trust

Extract from Saltmine Theatre Company's show, Soul in the Machine. All rights reserved by the Central ('Midlands') Region of YMCAs, England. Soul in the Machine is a theatrical adaptation of the Life of Sir George Williams, Founder of the YMCA.



This prayer was written by St Columba, who brought Christianity to Scotland via the Isle of Iona. Iona is regarded as a 'thin place'.

A thin place is where the divide between heaven and earth feels like they seem to touch. Even now, people who visit Iona say that they get an overwhelming sense of peace and freedom there.

But thin places aren't necessarily about where the place is. Some people have experienced thin places while running or cycling. Your church could be a thin place. I think it's more about the people there and their heart towards God that encourages a thin place.

I believe that my YMCA, and yours, could be a thin place if we approach it with hearts and attitudes open to what God is saying to us.

A YMCA Youth Worker, Scotland

Be a bright flame before me, O God, a guiding star above me.

Be a smooth path below me, a kindly shepherd behind me today, tonight, and forever.

Alone with none but you, my God, I journey on my way; what need I fear when you are near, O Lord of night and day?

More secure am I within your hand than if a multitude did round me stand. Amen.

A Prayer of St Columba (521-597 AD)



I put this Psalm to memory when I was 19 years old, working a summer job on the fish docks and living in a tent in Alaska.

In the land of the midnight sun, I would often struggle to sleep at night and would lie awake listening to the ocean waves crash on the rocky beach where I'd pitched my tent.

“On my bed I remember you,” the Psalmist writes, “I think of you through the watches of the night.”

Now years later - no matter where I am - this Psalm continues to inspire and encourage me.

A YMCA Pastor, Minnesota USA

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

Psalm 63

The Bible

Psalm 63 A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah. Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ©. NIV®. COPYRIGHT © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



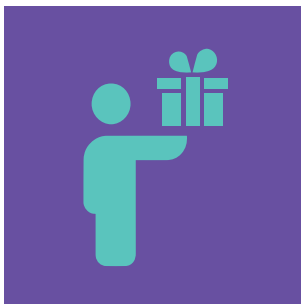
When I came to faith in Christ as a teenager, these words were known as the 'Parish Prayer' at St Mary's Church, Upton, Wirral. They reflected our vicar's longing that all who we met in daily life would somehow be touched by the life of Jesus working through the lives of his followers. For me they represent a deep confidence in the power of God's Spirit to draw others into a living relationship with Jesus. They have sustained my conviction that God uses the ordinary contexts and contacts of daily life to renew the life of his world.

**A Spiritual Advisor to a Local YMCA,
Midlands England**

Use me Lord today
to touch many other lives for you
whether by the life I live
the words I speak
or the prayer I breathe
And grant Lord that each life I touch
may be brought to Life by your Holy Spirit
In Jesus' name

Amen

**The Parish Prayer of St Mary's Upton,
Wirral**



Whilst helping to develop the play 'Soul in the Machine' the character of our founder George Williams has inspired the way I seek to lead in YMCA.

Sir George was passionate and focussed but so very humble, giving away the position and power afforded to him in order to make 'Christ known'. Continually favouring others, their talents gifts and abilities I have been struck by a heart continually living to serve others.

**A YMCA Leader, Inspired by George Williams,
North-East England**

Sir George William's final words spoken to the Paris Conference in 1905, and 50 years after the Paris Basis was written.

"I wish to say that, if you would have a happy, useful and profitable life, give your hearts to God while you are young. My Last Legacy - and it is a precious one - is the Young Men's Christian Association. I leave it to you, beloved young men of many countries, to carry on and extend. I hope that you would be as happy in the work as I have been and more successful; for this will mean blessedness to your souls and to the souls of multitudes of others."

Sir George Williams

Hodder-Williams, J.E., The Life of Sir George Williams, New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1906. An extract of these words can also be found on the memorial to Sir George Williams in St Paul's Cathedral, London.



Every few years my senior team and I study the ‘Benedictine Rule of Leadership’ as part our regular meeting and learning together. The book is focused on the 15th century Rule of St Benedict and provokes discussion for how we might lead today.

In forming an order, the Benedictines can be seen as a ‘movement’ and as such there are thoughts, ideas and challenges about priorities and approaches which help us as a team think through our YMCA values and principles, as we seek to lead a community organisation in the 21st Century.

The extract I have chosen is one that looks at how we are all equal, and all have something to share and learn from each other.

A YMCA Leader inspired by the Benedictine Rule, London England

The Rule of Group Reliance and Mutual Respect

In a cohesive team, mutual respect goes hand in hand with mutual reliance. In successful organisations people do things together and function as a team, this evokes a sense of community. In any community, however there are different jobs to be done, different positions to be held and different personalities to interact with.

Benedict understood that to maintain all-important group cohesiveness, absolute respect must be given for any and all members of the team regardless of social status, job title or station in life ...true organisational respect lies in the creative tension between hierarchal power and egalitarian justice ...Benedict’s rule reminds ...that the youngest, most junior could be made team leader, or an illiterate ex-slave could hold a more elevated position than an educated priest from a noble background.

The Rule demands that each “should each try to be the first to show respect to the other” and that to their colleagues that they should show brotherly and sisterly love.

Craig and Oliver Galbraith

*Craig S. Galbraith and Oliver Galbraith, III, The Benedictine Rule of Leadership, Chapter 9, pp77-79
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When I joined the YMCA I had no faith and it was a complete mystery to me, why we did the stuff we did; good stuff, but seemingly not connected.

After bothering people with “Why”? I was given a leaflet which contained the words of the Paris Basis, this didn’t enhance my understanding and frightened me somewhat.

Years later and still unsatisfied “why”?, I read the Kampala Principles and it was if I could see for the first time ...in front of me was a compelling reason “why” a reason to dedicate myself to the YMCA - a faith of sorts!

A YMCA Leader inspired by the World Council of YMCAs, Southern England

The Kampala Principles

The Paris Basis expresses that Christ is the centre of the Movement, which is conceived as a world-wide fellowship uniting Christians of all confessions. It is consistent with an open membership policy, involving people irrespective of faith as well as age, sex, race and social condition. The Basis is not designed to serve as a condition of individual YMCA membership, which is deliberately left to the discretion of constituent movements of the World Alliance. The Basis makes clear that the constituent movements of the Alliance have full freedom to express their purpose in other terms designed to correspond more directly to the needs and aspirations of those whom they are seeking to serve, provided these are regarded by the World Alliance as being consistent with the Paris Basis. Recognising the character of the YMCAs in the world today, this act of acknowledging the Paris Basis places upon the various associations and their members as fellow workers with God such imperatives as:

1. To work for equal opportunity and justice for all.
2. To work for and maintain an environment in which relationships among people are characterised by love and understanding.
3. To work for and maintain conditions, within the YMCA and in society, its organisations and institutions, which allow for honesty, depth and creativity.
4. To develop and maintain leadership and programme patterns which exemplify the varieties and depth of Christian experience.
5. To work for the development of the whole person.

The 6th World Council of YMCAs, Kampala, Uganda, 1973.



Welby cautions us about the all-consuming quest to win, to own, as amplified through Tolkien's the Lord of the Rings. Possession of the ring 'my precious one' has a corrosive and destructive impact on every character and on the world in which they live.

As a network of Christian charities the worldwide YMCA is undergirded by our founding Paris Basis. The vision is one of unification and harmonious relations – of Christians associating their efforts to extend God's Kingdom. In doing so we must ensure that we continue to act with charity (love) in all things and in every area. Wealth, talent ...anything we receive ...is for others.

**A YMCA Leader inspired by a Lent Reflection,
South-East England**

“Sin holds on to things, making ‘it’s mine’ out of a gift. In J.R.R. Tolkien’s famous books *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the holder of a golden ring acquires great power. The ring comes to each holder in different ways: by theft, by murder, by chance; but for each person the power they receive becomes the dominant factor in their lives, and causes their death if they do not dispose of the ring. It has the potential for infinite good or evil, but its corrosive effect invariably leads to the latter. The ring is ‘My Precious’, and those possessing it will turn even against their friends to hold on to it.

St Benedict, in his rule for monks, sees with immense clarity the bad effect it has on a community if we treat as ours everything we receive. He insists, again and again, that monks should have no private possessions at all. More than that, anything any individual receives as a gift has to be given to the community. It is clear that this was always a big problem. Even bigger, though, was the inequality caused by private possessions that, in the hierarchical societies of the Middle Ages, would provoke deep divisions with the community.

Not to hold on to what we receive – even to accept that it is not ours to use – goes against all our instincts. Only the Holy Spirit of God can so change us that we are ready to see that what we have is a trust, something to be held for the benefit of others.”

Justin Welby
The Archbishop of Canterbury

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My “faith moment” and spiritual re-boot was in a longer-than-expected silence at a Chief Executive Network meeting in Edinburgh, as a fellow CEO explained how she and her team received an essential £150k through prayer. She may not have even mentioned this until someone asked, “How did you get the money?” Every aspect of this story contributed to reawakening of my faith and my renewed ability to speak about faith and God and prayer; and to put that into action whenever I can even when uncomfortable to do so. Through that amazing faith moment I have found great comfort and courage on a daily basis in both good and difficult times since.

A YMCA Chief Executive Network Participant, Wales

(The Challenges of a Local YMCA - Recounted as part of a local YMCA vignette.)

The YMCA had developed a social impact bond project to deliver a youth training initiative. Two days before the deadline a funder withdrew. We only had £150,000 and DWP required us to have raised £300,000 if they were to invest. Unless replacement funding could be found within 48 hours, the project would collapse.

We didn't know what to do - so we prayed as a staff team.

We followed up the prayer by contacting our various networks: individuals, businesses and community groups ...and we thank God that £155,000 was raised by the end of the day, with investments from £5,000 to £50,000.

Chief Executive Network Conference, Edinburgh, 2016



I read a book some years ago when I first became a Christian. It was titled 'The Jesus I never Knew' by Philip Yancey. Surprisingly it's a book I keep coming back to time and time again. It suggests that the reader should prepare for a surprise encounter, and I've got to say every time I pick this book up I continue to be surprised. I agree with Yancey when he suggests that No one could ever think of describing Jesus as 'boring and predictable'. He asks how is then that the church has tamed such a character? As I read this book I found a great understanding and revelation of a different Jesus to the one I had learned about in the classroom and in my first Church. The readings and reflections led me to have a vivid, well-informed deeper and down to earth appreciation of Jesus. That man who has changed my life personally, and the course of history.

A YMCA National Council Trustee, England & Wales

Suppose we hear an unknown man spoken of by many men. Suppose we were puzzled to hear that some men said he was too tall and some too short; some objected to his fatness, some lamented his leanness; some thought him too dark, and some too fair. One explanation ... would be that he might be an odd shape. But there is another explanation. He might be the right shape ... Perhaps (in short) this extraordinary thing is really the ordinary thing; at least the normal thing, the centre.

G. K. Chesterton

*G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936). First used in *Orthodoxy* by G. K. Chesterton, which was originally published in 1908. Quoted here in Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002, 12. Referenced with permission.*



What inspires me about the Paris Basis is the succinct, enduring message to work for the extension of God's Kingdom, harmoniously with others, especially fellow believers, leaving differences of opinion at the door.

Seeing lives transformed by faith being put into practice, through actions taken, words spoken and silent prayer. Observing God's love demonstrated and articulated by word and deed, and seeing the offer of a potential life-changing relationship with Jesus as part of everyone's solution. That's what it means to me.

A Business Consultant who became a YMCA CEO, UK

The Paris Basis

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young people who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom amongst young people.

Any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the constituent members and associates of the World Alliance.

World Alliance of YMCAs, 1855
(translated from the French original)