**SOUTH WEST MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE**

***adventurous faith* | *missional hope* | *grounded love***

**Learning Journal guidelines**

The Learning Journal is an exercise we ask you to undertake after residential weekends 1-5. Year 2 LLMs (Readers), Yr 1 ordinands and Yr 2 ordinands on a 3 year course also need to complete a journal after Lent/ Easter School. It should also be annotated during the course of the year as you develop your views.

**Aim**: to encourage (a) self-awareness about your personal, theological and ministerial development (b) skills of theological reflection. In particular, journaling should enable you to:

* reflect with your Journal Tutor on the impact of training on your faith; your understanding of the Church, vocation, and ministry; your relationships with others; your spiritual life and self-awareness.
* link the different parts of the Course and integrate them with your own development.
* develop the practice of theological reflection and the ability to compare different methods of reflection.

**Practicalities:**

* During the residential weekend or Lent/Easter School, make a note of any events, ideas or themes which particularly strike you or inspire you and which you might want to reflect on in your journal.
* Please set aside enough time to pray, reflect and write your journal during the week following a residential weekend or Lent/Easter School.
* The details of what you need to do are set out in the table on page 3.
* Journals should be about 700 words long and written on the proforma provided.
* Once you have written your journal, email it to your Journal Tutor and Staff Tutor and also upload a copy to your Formation folder on Moodle.
* Meet with your Journal Tutor to discuss what you have written before the next residential weekend. Your Journal Tutor sits outside the formal structures of SWMTC. S/he will not inform us of the content of your discussion, but will be asked to write a short report at the end of the year detailing how you engaged with the process.
* Independent students are encouraged to journal especially if you are in a vocational discernment process. You are not assigned a Journal Tutor, but you might want to talk about your Journal with your Spiritual Director, your parish priest or a supportive friend.
* As the year goes on, annotate your journal in the light of further learning/experiences/ ideas/sermons. Anything that adds to your learning process or affirms/changes your mind about something you have studied or experienced can be commented on in an annotation. Don’t change your original reflections. Instead add any further reflection in a different font or colour and remember to date your annotation.
* On Moodle, you will find further information about models of theological reflection and some worked examples of it.

**Guidance:**

* Journaling is not about writing a series of brilliant set answers. Rather it is a way of integrating your experience of the weekends into the rest of your study, work, prayer and life. It is deeply personal to you and reflects your individual walk with God. At the same time, it is not simply a private set of reflections which we insist on seeing, but one means of assessing your formation. It will help shape the report we write on you at the end of each year.
* Journaling is about developing reflective, self-critical habits which can continue through the lifelong learning that we hope you will embrace in your ministry. Some will find journaling hard at first – that is why we have provided a structured set of questions. To others it will come more easily, especially if you already keep some form of journal.
* You should be as open in the journal entries as you feel comfortable with, in the context of a formal document. However, you might experience reactions to the Course material, or personal problems thrown up by it, which seem to you so serious – in terms of your own psychological or spiritual stability – that they are properly approached through a face-to-face meeting with your Staff Tutor or spiritual director, or perhaps with one of the chaplains. In that case they should not be discussed in detail in your journal entry. You may just want to use some phrase such as ‘I found this very hard’, then if questioned, explain that you have sought help with it. But if you do withhold what you know is an important reaction, make sure you do address it with an appropriate confidant. (This process of deciding where to seek help, and being sure to seek it, models good professional practice for any worker in a pastoral profession).
* Again, it is good practice to reflect on your reactions to others. It is entirely valid to comment that a presentation by a teacher was baffling or unhelpful, or to say that you found it difficult to profit from working with a particular group of students. That is a comment about yourself, in relation to content and to others, which can then be explored. However, negative reactions to or judgments about teachers or fellow students as people, (as opposed to reactions to their roles as teachers or supervisors or co-workers) are not appropriate. Again, a personal difficulty which you consider is really obstructing your growth or training should be taken up with your Staff Tutor.
* It is important to use the Learning Journal to focus on your own reactions to sessions, rather than to judge those sessions objectively as pieces of teaching. The latter is the purpose of the reviews at the weekends and the student evaluation sheets. Thus, a session may spark off a strong reaction in you because it was taught in a particular way. Perhaps it was not taught appropriately in your view (evaluation), but perhaps also your reaction tells you something about yourself, your own theological position, your own strengths and vulnerabilities (reflective learning). Your journal is the place to focus on your reflective learning rather than evaluation.

**Writing your journal:**

You can find details about writing your journal in the table on the next page. In deciding which model of reflection to use, please note the following:

***First years and new students in the second year*** should choose model A for the first two weekends, a different model for the next two weekends, and then any of the models for the fifth weekend and Lent/Easter School.

***Second years*** should choose whichever model feels most appropriate, but ensure that they use all three models during the year.

***Third year ordinands*** can choose any of the models, but should also try at least one other model such as Laurie Green’s “Doing Theology Spiral” in his book *Let’s Do Theology* (London: Mowbray, 2009) or one of the models in the *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection* (London: SCM, 2019).

Your Learning Journal should cover the following, using the proforma provided:

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| **SECTION 1** (c. 200 words) | Write about your personal reactions to the residential weekend or Lent/Easter School. In particular, what did you find most affirming? And most challenging? |
| **SECTION 2** (c. 400-500 words) | Pick one element of the weekend – this could be one of the lecture sessions, or one of the acts of worship, or the sermon at the final Eucharist. Focusing on that element alone, use one of the following models to ***write a short theological reflection*** which describes how it has influenced your faith/theological thinking/spiritual life. See above for guidance about which model you should choose. |
| **Model A** | **Model B** | **Model C** |
| Using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, consider your chosen element through *all* four lenses of Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. What light does each throw on your experience at the residential? Reflect on what emerges and what God might be saying to you through that. Is there one of the four lenses which you use most? If so, why?What else have you learned from your online work/RPS/reading/personal prayer, which interacts with your reflections? What questions are you left wanting to ask? | What piece of Scripture did your chosen element remind you of? Think yourself into the passage. Reflect on images or themes within the passage and the light they may throw on your experience at the residential? What might God be saying to you through this interaction of experience and Scripture? What else have you learned from your online work/RPS/reading/personal prayer, which interacts with your reflections? What questions are you left wanting to ask? | Write about how your chosen element has affected or might affect your relationship with God, other human beings and the world. Work your way round that triangle of relationships. In which of them were you most informed or challenged, and why?What else have you learned from your online work/RPS/reading/personal prayer, which interacts with your reflections? What questions are you left wanting to ask? |
| **SECTION 3** (c. 100-200 words) | ***First years and new students in the second year:*** Skills for ministry: (a) What experience of liturgy or prayer was new to you, or struck you in a new way? Set out how it did.(b) Did you work with others in a new way, or with students with whom you had not worked before? If so, how? |
| ***Second and third years:*** Skills for ministry: What new insights did you have about pastoral/professional practice?The practice of Theological Reflection: (a) Which model of reflection did you choose? Why do you think that was? (b) At a few points in the year, compare your experiences of using different models of reflection. Which taught you most? Which surprised you most? |