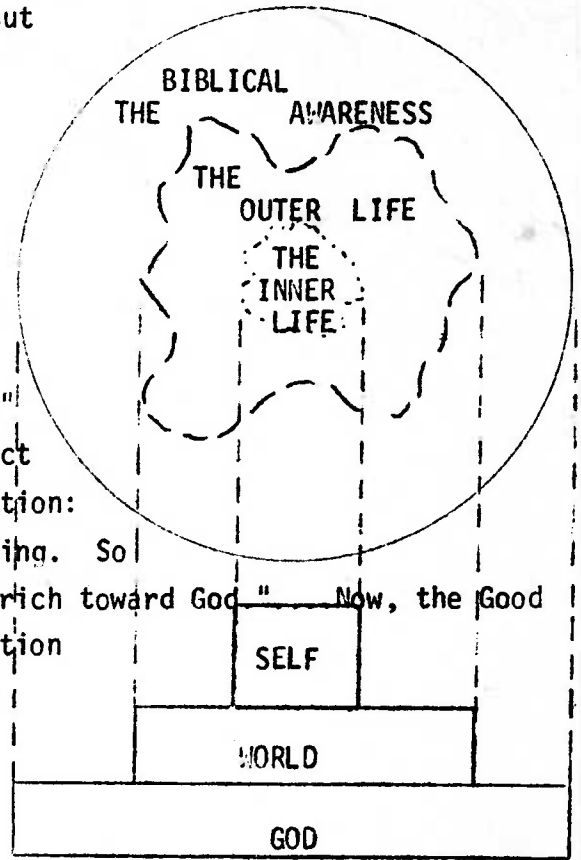


-----GUIDELINES FOR MEDITATION GROUPS-----

President Nixon's inaugural described the doughnut effect of our American existence today as, in general, "rich in goods and ragged in spirit." "Experiment in TV: THE CUBE" (24 Feb 69 NYC Channel 4), dramatizing that the inner life, which first became hollow-unreal and has now become surreal, puts it this way: "You're really in the middle of the inside of yourself.... You'll never get out of the cube till your dead." This folksong presses the tragedy further: neglect of the inner life effects a progressive degeneration: from hollow to unreal to imprisoning and destroying. So it is, says Jesus, of the rich fool who is not "rich toward God." Now, the Good News, the "Gospel," is (1) that this inner condition of distress and death is remediable and that (2) the remedy relates to justice and peace in the outer life (the world) (3) through continuous attending to *the biblical awareness*



of the Source of our life, inner and outer, as we perceive and are grasped by this Source in Jesus Christ...That's enough theology to get us into our *MEDITATION GROUPS*.

SO WHAT'S A MEDITATION GROUP? Well, you sit around in this circle with a guru whose job is to help you experience what a meditation group is. For the sessions in this series, it's a group that tries to get at the malnutrition described above, with the double aim of habituating us to the Presence of God ["the biblical awareness"] and thus to the joy-intending demands he makes on us ["self"] in all our relationships ["world"], and thus also on our society and mankind. It proceeds on the knowledge that what gets your attention gets you, and it asks you to take better charge of your attending and deciding and disposing....A LENTEN meditation group functions on this side of the repentance/faith polarity: Easter, resurrection, joy, fulfilment, the new order, the dignity of each within the welfare of all, the true riches, grace, hope, celebration--all this lies on the other side. Lent is evaluation-time: What do I, this local church, the Church in the world, the American society, the world--what does all this look like in the light of what should be, given the inner and outer resources God has made available to us and the world? Under this self-examination, what is my/our responsibility for shaping my/our life/world within the power-limits I/we have? Here's money-management at home...and the crisis of the cities...and foreign policy...and the generation gap...and....

SO WHAT ARE THE GROUND RULES? Let's call them "guidelines": we want you to take them seriously, but not constrictingly; but the better you observe them (a lot of experience indicates), the more profitable your group experience will be....(1) Try to get the feel of this type of group, instead of struggling to shape it into something more familiar. (2) Don't fight the poor guru when he tries to signal that you've wandered out of the ballpark and won't you please come back. The playing field of the ballpark is diagrammed above, and the balls are the quotations in THE FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER. (3) Risk something of yourself: take a chance on being wounded, and healed, in the house of your Friend and your friends. Through the quotes, own up to your ideas, feelings, behavior: Lent is about repentance, penitence, confession, forgiveness in restitution (in action). Open your cube! (4) Open yourself, but don't expect the group to attend only to your agonies: it's a meditation group addressing a range of quotations from daily readings--not a therapy group, though the experience should be good for what ails you. (5) Remember that the more honest and open you are, the better model you are for others to gain the courage to risk and trust: you are a minister in a mutual ministry, to the glory of God and the good of man. (6) Keep asking yourself--and sometimes convert the questions to the second person and address them to others in the group--*How am I feeling right now? What am I really thinking about all this, and particularly just at this moment? What might I do about all this in the spheres of my existence (my inner life, my home, my work, my leisure, my life as citizen at all political levels, my response to public issues both domestic and foreign? Whom do I intend to speak with about something I intend to do in the light of what has come to me in this meditation group? In the light of the Gospel as I am coming to perceive it and be grasped by it, how can I so do my own thing as to help others to do their own thing and develop the will & ability to help still others?*