

ROMTE

Nijkleaster-blog
New Monastic Notes



Nijkleaster



MONASTERY WALK

The Wednesday monastery walk has been a tradition since Nijkleaster was founded in 2012. Every Wednesday morning, people come from near and far to gather at the church in Jorwert for the monastery morning program: a morning tour; coffee; the monastery walk itself; and lunch to wrap things up (9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). We deliberately chose a weekday to break the automatic association between Sunday and faith. We also deliberately go outdoors every time. Faith often seems to take place indoors: in a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque. By going outside, faith and spirituality are connected to all of creation: sun and rain, flowers and trees, people and animals, body and mind. By going outside, the walkers experience the healing power of nature.

The monastery walk follows a set pattern: silence, reflection, and connection. The walk begins in silence. After the morning service and coffee, enough words have already been spoken. It is then good to become silent again and let everything sink in. In the second part, participants are given a question for reflection. This question draws on one of the texts read during the morning service and is intended to help bring the message closer to the participants: What are your thoughts on this? What does this mean for your life? In the third part, participants are invited to walk alongside someone else. They are given brief spiritual exercises to express what is on their minds and, at the same time, to listen carefully to what is on others' minds. It is an exercise in self-expression and listening.

Back in the church, everyone forms a circle. During lunch, they share their experiences from the morning: what the silence, reflection, and connection meant to them, what a particular text evoked, and how each person dealt with the reflection question. In the first year, a woman (who was approaching 90 years of age) came up to me and said, 'Pastor, for the first time in my life, I've written my own sermon. First I heard the text, then I was given a question for reflection and thought about it. During the walk, I was able to formulate my own thoughts while also listening carefully to my walking partner. And during dinner, I gained even more new perspectives. Now I can pretty much write my own sermon. Thank you so much!'

That's when we knew we were on the right track with our monastery walk. As Nijkleaster, we don't do much ourselves. We offer a program, we try to create a safe space, and let God do the work. That's why every monastery walk, week after week, is a surprising pilgrimage of heart and mind, of body and soul.

ds. Hinne Wagenaar