

If you were given the opportunity to meet Jesus, to walk beside him, to change your heart, wouldn't you jump at the chance? That's exactly what a group of new friends and I have been doing for six weeks each fall and spring. We, along with twenty or so other ARISE groups are on a journey of faith.

Hello. My name is Marjorie McInnes. I'd like to take just a few minutes of your time to tell you about a very special program. When the invitation to join an ARISE group appeared in the bulletin a year ago last fall, I was curious. The opportunity to be part of a discussion group, a small faith community, consisting of 10 or 12 parishioners, was intriguing. It seemed as if it could be a wonderful supplement to attending Mass, a way to connect with some other members of the parish in a more personal way. Putting one's faith into words is often not easy. ARISE seemed as if it might be a safe place to begin such a discussion. I decided to give it a try and I'm so glad that I did!

Each season of ARISE consists of six weekly 90 minute sessions which revolve around a different selection from sacred scripture. During the past three seasons, we've been invited to "Encounter Christ Today" in our lives, to "Change Our Hearts" during Lent, and to "Walk in the Footsteps of Christ" - to be his instrument. Each week, the group listens to a passage from the Bible. As we listen for a word or phrase that particularly speaks to us, we often look at the familiar words in a new way. The group reflects on the reading of the day, discusses it, and prays about it. There's a group leader to facilitate the process. But it's much more than a Bible study group. We've been challenged to consider what we might do individually and as a group to put our faith into action.

After that initial decision to join an ARISE group for the first season, I was hooked! I had met a varied group of new friends, people I might never have otherwise encountered, and there was definitely a sense of spiritual connectedness among us. The composition of the group has changed a bit from season to season, but new members quickly feel like old friends. The discussion is always lively and thoughtful. We enjoy each others' insights about the day's scripture passage and about trying to

live our faith. No one is an expert, but everyone's ideas are respected, even if we don't always agree with one another. And, by the way, if you just want to listen, that's fine, too!

Season Four is called "New Heart, New Spirit". It begins during the first week of Lent. There are meeting times during the day or in the evening. It's never too late to be welcomed into a group. If you're looking for a way to enrich your Lenten experience, why not give yourself the gift of 90 minutes a week with ARISE? I think that you'll be glad you did!