

# IN OUR HANDS

## A MAKER'S MANIFESTO FOR CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH CREATIVE PRACTICES

by Bonnie Smith Whitehouse, Ph.D.

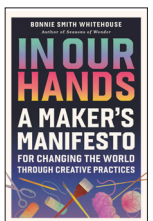


## Reading Group Guide

1. **The Stories We Tell Ourselves About Making.** *Handiwork. Craft. Art.* Whatever you call the act of creating things with your hands, the stories we've told ourselves shape how we show understand this subject. Before gathering with your book group, reflect on what making things with your hands has meant to you across your lifetime. Has it been connected to power? To shame? To expression? To meditation? To escape? To liberation? To the elders who came before you?
2. **Soul Companions.** On p. 13, we are offered the definition of a soul companion: "*Across time, space, and culture, when people gather to tell their stories, they often begin by asking a companion to accompany and inspire them as they reveal what's on their heart. Beckoning a soul companion is calling on, listening for, and expecting a divine, radiant, creative spirit to come to your side.*" If you were to embark on a journey of making things with your hands, who or what might you ask to come to your side as a soul companion?
3. **The Child Within.** On p. 24, we encounter the idea that, like the rings of a tree that hold the record of its life, each of us contains younger versions of ourselves. At our very core, we can still greet the child we once were. How would you describe a younger version of yourself that still lives within you? What did that child love to make or imagine?
4. **Imaginal Intelligence.** In a world where so much lies beyond our control and digital noise can drown out our inner lives, it's essential to find ways to "come home" to ourselves. Our imaginations, our dream worlds, and our creative impulses belong to each of us alone and make us our unique, unrepeatable selves. What does your group think about *In Our Hands'* ideas for cultivating *imaginal intelligence* in ourselves and in others? What practices have helped you connect with your own inner world?
5. **Manifest.** The word *manifest* literally means "to bring forth with the hands." The chapter by that name is full of artists and makers who have scribbled, painted, sculpted, and quilted to make meaning of their own lives. Before your gathering, look up the work of one artist-maker featured in this chapter and spend some time with looking at her work. What did you discover? What did it stir in you?
6. **Permission and Perfectionism.** For the author, Brigid of Kildare embodies the spirit of self-directed creative power — of not waiting for permission, not waiting to be "good enough." Have you ever encountered a saint, goddess, ancestor, or figure who has inspired you to answer what you feel called to do, even when it doesn't fit neatly into societal expectations? Who might be your Brigid?



ISBN: 9798894142876  
Format: Hardcover  
Price: \$29.00 USD  
Also available in audiobook and ebook



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7. **The Fool.** Discuss The Fool (pp. 124-125). What does this ancient archetype bring to mind for your group? What are some things you'd like to release or leave behind? And what would you carry in your knapsack if you were setting off on a new journey, ready to be unburdened and allow yourself completely open to what comes next?
8. **Making Together.** *In Our Hands* is full of invitations to create with your own two hands. What would you most like to try? Might there be a project your group would want to take on collectively? Something you could make, share, or give together?
9. **Freedom of Assembly.** Discuss this idea from p. 198: *"To gather with people offline, outside of our typical professional or family and friend groups around a shared hobby is to affirm that freedom is not only about rights and laws; freedom is about the ability to assemble, create, and find joy."* How does this land with your group? Where do you already experience this kind of freedom, or where do you long for it?
10. **Making for the Future.** What might you make as an offering for the generations that come after you? What do you want to leave behind, not just as an object, but as a testament to who you were and what you valued?
11. **The Quiet Revolution.** Not all revolutions roar. Quieter ones can ignite when people clasp hands and bring their imaginations, their individuality, and their courage to the table. Can your group envision one small way you might come together to creatively respond to a pressing problem of today?



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