

*Cultivating
quiet*



Advent 2023

S^tPhilip's
episcopal church

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How to cultivate quiet

As we enter this season of waiting, cultivating quiet is a perfect preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

God loves us. God longs for relationship with us. Like every relationship, this one with God requires tending. We must make way for God in our hearts by setting aside time to listen, learn, and hear in ongoing conversation.

“So,” you may be asking, “how am I supposed to do this?”

This Advent, we invite you to practice quiet listening through *meditation* and *contemplation*. Christian meditation uses breathing techniques and repetition to set a seed of thought. It opens us to contemplation, where we become porous to the Holy Spirit. Contemplation is when and where God shows up.

Breathing, seeding and pondering

Breathing

First, find a quiet time and place. Aim for 5-10 minutes, but don't be discouraged if you only do 2-3 minutes at the beginning.

You can light a candle if that would help you center yourself. You can close your eyes if you want. These things are personal preferences.

- Now breathe
- Notice your breath – focus on just your breath for 30 seconds or so
- Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, then exhale through your mouth; repeat
- After a few moments, you might notice your heart rate slowing down
- Keep breathing and noticing
- As you continue breathing, let God know you are there making space and time, seeking relationship

Now... what do you hear around you? What do you feel?

If you find yourself racing forward to your to-do list for the day, go back to your breathing. Breathing alone is a great first practice of meditation.

Seeding a Thought

After slowing down our breathing, we can seed a thought.

In all the following suggestions, it may be helpful to find a single line or phrase that jumps out for you. The idea is to repeat that verse or line over and over, slowly. Carry it with you through the day.

A common seed is from Psalm 46:10: *Be still and know that I am God.* This verse works especially well when we progressively drop words:

Be still and know that I am God. (pause, breathe, repeat)

Be still and know that I am. (pause, breathe, repeat)

Be still and know. (pause, breathe, repeat a few more times)

Be still. (pause, breathe even more times)

Be. (pause and repeat, or just sit in the silence you've created)

Other seeding ideas:

Start with the Psalms. The psalms are our oldest prayers and songs, a gift from our Jewish brothers and sisters. They lie at the heart of the Benedictine tradition, the spiritual forebear of the Anglican tradition.

Our Book of Common Prayer has the entire Psalter in it. I also highly recommend *Psalms for Praying* by Nan Merrill. While not a direct translation, this beautiful and gentle version of the psalter is for praying through, where God is always characterized as Love or Beloved.

Take a look at Psalms 1, 62, 63, 103, 139, or specifically the verses found in psalm 9:1 and 37:7.

Scripture. Read the scriptures from the daily lectionary, last Sunday's bulletin, or these that are specific to listening:

1 Samuel, 3:1-11 ("Speak Lord, for your servant is listening...")

Isaiah 43:1-7 ("Because you are precious in my sight"...)

Isaiah 55:1-13 ("Listen carefully to me...")

Jeremiah 29:11-14 ("I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord...")

Luke 8:4-15 (Parable of the Sower)

Romans 8:38-39 (“Nothing will separate us from the love of God”)

Revelation 3:20 (“Listen!...”)

Practice the Examen of Ignatius of Loyola: Set aside time at the end of each day to reflect. Put down your book or your tablet or your phone to think back through just today. Take a few deep breaths.

- Ask for God’s light on your experiences
- Pray in gratitude for God’s gifts in the day that has passed
- Reflect on your response to God as you went about your day
- Pray for forgiveness in ways you may have fallen short
- Consider the next day and pray for the people and events that will be part of your life

Ponder

What in my life now seems to carry an invitation or challenge me to become more reflective?

What can I do with the caution I may feel about taking God more seriously in my life?

As I try to be open to God’s word in my life, what do I notice about the quality of my presence to others?

What do I notice about myself and my thirst for God when I take time to “be still” and listen?

Cultivating quiet in the church

Wednesday, December 13

Wednesday, December 20

6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

*Join us for Cultivating Quiet – an hour of rest, contemplation and prayer in the church.
Or stop by any time to practice cultivating quiet – we’ll open the church for you.*