



Listening, Praying & Discerning

We are coming together to open our hearts, minds and spirits – to allow God’s Spirit to speak to us and through us. **How is God calling Westminster United Church at this time?** The journey of discovery depends as much on us being personally transformed as it does on the congregation being transformed together. And so... we begin this season of prayer.

Week 1- Invitation to Silence and Solitude

In this time of social distancing and self-isolation, it may seem strange to encourage silence and solitude. Solitude is about being intentionally alone with oneself in order to come nearer to both ourselves and to God. **Jesus frequently spent time in solitude and silence:** before beginning his ministry (Mark 1:12) or making decisions (Luke 6:12-16) while grieving (Matthew 14:13), while anxious (Mark 14:32) and as he handled life’s ongoing demands (Luke 5:15-16). Similarly, we are in a new moment. As we share our sorrows, insights and anxieties and while we’re in the midst of life’s demands, we return again and again to God’s grounding presence through prayer.

PRAY

This week try to spend anywhere from 2 to 20 minutes per day in intentional, contemplative prayer:

- Sit comfortably
- Decide how long you wish to be in silence—2 min, 5 min, working your way up gradually to 10, 15 or 20 minutes—you may wish to set a timer.
- State your intention (to be fully present to God); ask for God’s help.
- Breathe in. Breathe out. Focus on your breathing while you enter a time of silence.
- Your mind will wander! Be gracious and do not judge yourself! A wandering mind is a gift—it gives you multiple opportunities to practice returning to God.
- When your mind wanders, focus on your breath, or use a word or very short prayer to return to God. “God, I give this time to you” or “Trust” or “Peace.”
- Your mind will bring up all manner of things, from grocery lists to old wounds to great insights. Accept and release all of these. If it is of value, it will still be there for you when you leave your time of silence. The goal is to practice returning to God.

“Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to [his disciples], ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

Mark 6:31-32



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