



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. We continue on our journey in this season of prayer...

Week 4 – Prayer of Wonder

In a few weeks (!!) we will be celebrating Advent, that season of wonder when hope seems to once again find its way into our conversations. This year especially we seem to need a lot of hope. Often hope finds its roots in times of despair – and indeed, the world into which Jesus was born included much despair. But in the gospel birth narratives, hope is also rooted in wonder, in this strange announcement of good news delivered in the form of a small child among angels and shepherds – the poor and the glorious somehow mixed together. We forget sometimes that the hope promised in the birth narratives did not bear fruit immediately. It was 30 years before Jesus became the man who stilled winds and seas. Advent hope invites us to be prepared to nurture hope for the long haul. Can we do this? A positive answer to this question, it seems to me, is tied to wonder, to seeing the awe, joy and beauty in the world, even as we hope and act to nurture a transformed world...

“They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

Matthew 8:27

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.



credenceandco.com



- At the end of your time of prayer, give thanks to God for being with you. Breathe deeply and close your time of silence.

(Note: For a helpful prayer app, please see the following:

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-mobile-app>)

REFLECT

Outside of this time of prayer, when you meet with your small group or are reflecting on your own, consider the following questions:

1. What do awe and wonder feel like for you? (Sometimes, awe and wonder are not in sync with our own life circumstances. When that occurs, we allow others to carry this spirit for us, until we are able to be in joy again.)
2. What does it mean for Westminster United to embrace the possibility of joy, awe and wonder?
3. As you reflect on the overarching questions for WUC (noted below) what do you notice God saying?

Overarching questions that Westminster United Church is asking:

- *God, what type of world are you seeking to call forth?*
- *What are you (God) asking us to let go of? What are you asking us to take on?*
- *How do we nurture a deeper relationship with you?*
- *What practical next steps are we invited to take as a congregation?*

Notes:



credenceandco.com