

Centering Prayer Opportunities at First United Church

There are two types of offerings for centering prayer experience at First United. Contact Nan at 250 832-3733, or Martha at 250 832-4119 for more information or if you would like to attend a workshop or weekly sittings.

>>> 6-Session Workshop

Take part in a **6-week workshop** incorporating Thomas Keating's DVD series, *Introduction to the Centering Prayer Practice*. Each weekly DVD segment is approximately 30 minutes long.

Contents of the DVD instruction:

- The discipline of centering prayer
- Basic principles of centering prayer
- Method of centering prayer (two parts)
- What centering prayer is / is not
- Prayer in Secret

>>> Weekly Sittings

Attend weekly sessions to practice centering prayer with other individuals. This format does not include the DVD instruction.

The format of both types of Centering Prayer offerings:

- A gathering prayer
- Check in
- 30 minute DVD presentation (for workshops only)
- 20 minutes of centering prayer practice
- Leave the room quietly.

Reading to broaden your understanding

Bourgeault, Cynthia, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*

Bourgeault, Cynthia, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming An Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart*

Helminski, Kabir, *Living Presence: A Sufi Way to Mindfulness and the Essential Self*

Keating, Thomas, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospels*

Merton, Thomas, *Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century*

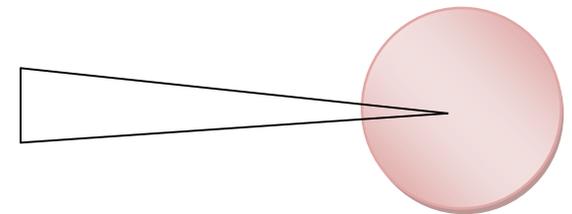
Pennington, M. Basil, *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form*

First United Church
Phone (250) 832-3860
Email firstunitedchurch@sunlite.ca
Web site: firstunitedsalmonarm.ca
Fax (250) 832-4991
P.O. Box 940, Salmon Arm, B.C., V1E 4P1
Street Address: 30 - 4th Street, S.E., Salmon Arm

Centering Prayer

Resting in the Presence of God

**A contemplative practice
suitable for *everyone***



“In centering prayer, the heart opens
towards the invisible,
but always-present One.”

Introduction to Centering Prayer

Prayer serves many functions. It brings our attention to the fact that God is present. It makes the spot of ground on which we stand holy ground. It quiets and focuses the mind, clarifies intention and opens up the heart and lungs as we breathe more deeply and relax into this most intimate encounter. As a communal practice, praying creates consensus and convergence of focus, teaching us how to speak with one voice and one hope.

The practice of **centering prayer** (a form of Christian meditation) is modeled on ancient prayer practices of the Christian contemplative heritage. Christ prayed in this manner at the garden of Gethsemane. It was adopted by, among others, the Fathers and Mothers of the Desert, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

Centering prayer prepares us to receive the gift of God's presence. We do this by resting with God in our most inner space. This form of prayer emphasizes prayer as a personal relationship with God. At the same time, it is a discipline to foster and serve this relationship by a regular, daily practice.

Today the main proponent of centering prayer is Thomas Keating, founder of the organization Contemplative Outreach.

Resting in the presence of God....

The Method of Centering Prayer

1. Give God Consent

Centering prayer is a prayer of consent. When we practice it, we consent to God's presence and His working within us. We do this at the beginning of each sitting.

2. Choose a sacred word

When you first begin centering prayer, you choose a sacred word, a word that helps you return to centering prayer when your mind wanders. It can be a name of God, or any other word that works for you, such as presence, peace, within, stillness and so on.

3. Sit comfortably

Sit comfortably in a chair, back straight, feet comfortably spaced on the floor. Ensure your body is relaxed. Close your eyes.

4. For the next 20 minutes

Bring your mind within, let it rest. Say inwardly your sacred word. Go to your most inner place. Rest there. When thoughts arrive, return gently to your sacred word.

5. After 20 minutes

Bring your attention to your body, and then slowly bring your attention back into the room.

Move gently into your regular activity.

It's simple but not easy!

Wise Words from wise hearts

"...when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you."

Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 6.6

"The Father spoke one word from all eternity, and he spoke it in silence, and it is in silence that we hear it."

16th-century mystic John of the Cross

"Be still and know that I am God."

Psalms 46:10

"Your heart knows the way to go."

Cynthia Bourgeault

"God speaks in the silence of the heart."

Mother Theresa

"What you dare not hope for – that is what He gives you."

Frère Roger, Taizé Community