

Hello, I'm pastor Lydia. Let me lead us into the Spiritual Practice portion of our worship this morning.

The season following Easter, the resurrection of Jesus is a time of seeing and noticing signs of new life and resurrection. It was true for the followers of Jesus then, trying to figure out how to make sense of it all, what to do next, who they were to be as a community. Trying to discern what this resurrection of Jesus meant for them. For us, we'll be entering into the season of listening to what the Holy Spirit is speaking to and through us now these next few months. What does it look like to Listen to the Spirit....

The concept of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity is not explicitly stated in the Old Testament but the Holy Spirit in the New Testament draws from tradition like in Genesis, the Spirit of God, or the breath of God, hovering over the waters in creation, and the Divine Wisdom personified in texts like Proverbs. The Holy Spirit has been imagined or described as like the wind, or like fire in pentecost. For today's spiritual practice I wanted to invite us in carving out space and time in our minds and in our bodies to listen and practice being aware and noticing what is around us, among us, and within us, using our breath to ground us. Like a centering piece that we can always come back to, no matter what we may hear or notice outside of us and in us, we'll use the breath to move us through.

As we do so, I invite you to be open to what you're hearing externally, physical sounds, and also what you may be hearing internally, your own thoughts. I also invite you to be aware of your body, physically, where you notice tension or energy, and also aware of your feelings, your emotions, what might come up for you if anything. It's a spiritual practice that has connections to Christian contemplative methods and also from other faiths in other parts of the world that also seek awareness to truth. These days many call it Mindfulness exercises, a really great way for us to be mindful of ourselves, our bodies, our minds, and our spirit, who is one with the Holy Spirit. It's called a practice, meaning it might not go as planned, like when I'm trying to play piano these days without having practiced lately, the song does not sound like what it used to sound like when I used to play every day. So be patient with yourself. You might get distracted or feel something you weren't ready for, or feel nothing and be bored. I invite you to just try, and also try it again.

Let's begin.

Get your body in a comfortable position but aware. Maybe seated upright, tall spine, with hands relaxed palms up on your lap. Comfortable but aware. You can close your eyes or have a soft gaze. Take a few deep breaths. Take a deep breath in and a breath out. Take another deep breath in and hold for one, two, three, and breathe out everything. Again, take a deep breath in, hold one, two, three... and breathe everything out. Continue breathing and as you do so, let's do a body scan to help us relax and become aware of our bodies. Starting with the top of your head, imagine wiping across your forehead, smoothing it out, and relaxing your eyebrows, your eye sockets, as if they're floating in water.... relax your cheekbones, cheeks and your jaw. You can let your mouth relax and your tongue loose, even imagining your teeth to relax. Soften your neck. Continue to breathe in and out.

As you take deep breath in and out, relax your shoulders and let your arms hang loose. You might feel the awareness of your hands and your fingers, maybe tingling.

As you breathe in and out, feel your stomach expand and relax.

Notice your legs, where they are wrinkled or scrunched up, or relaxed, notice them from the inside.

Notice your feet wherever they are and as you breathe in, feel the breath going into your toes and breath out from your toes.

Notice the sounds around you. Listen. Maybe sounds far away, or sounds nearby, just notice without judgement.

If any thoughts arise, just notice them as an observer. Look upon them without “thinking” them, with kindness and compassion. Just let them be, as thoughts come and go.

Now, notice your heart. Notice what you might be feeling, again without judgment just be aware of your feelings. Whether the feeling is strong, positive, or negative, just thank the feeling for surfacing and be kind to that emotion.

Let's go back to our body. Scan your body to see if there's any place in your body that feels tension you can tend to. Feel free to place a hand there, maybe hands on your heart, to just bring awareness and kindness to it. Maybe your shoulder where we often carry tension. Take a deep breath in and relax that part even deeper as you breathe out.

Take a deep breath in and a big deep breath out. You may open your eyes when you're ready.

Thanks for trying that out with me. Listening to your body, giving yourself a moment to pause and breath, how wonderful it is to simply be.... with you.

I was going to say that I've been doing these with my small group that I lead with Sara Minard. It's a Mindfulness Community Group that starts with some contemplation on a short scripture and then Sara who's actually trained practitioner leads us through these rich practices like this. If you'd like to join us, we meet on Tuesdays at 1pm on zoom. You can email me at lydia@reservoirchurch.org if you're interested.