

## **SPIRITUAL PRACTICE | Prayer of the Heart**

### **Wooden Heart | "Waiting for the Heart"**

**Verse |** John 14:27

#### **Intro**

Each Sunday we integrate a spiritual practice as part of our service, because spiritual practices allow us the opportunity to:

- 1) draw close to our own hearts - a check-in "how are we doing?" and
- 2) draw close to the presence of God that is always with us - offering us grounding in the depths of love - what matters most.

We are all different - unique - and our relationships/ways of connecting with God are too... It's why we provide so many varied practices week to week .. some that might grab you and some that might not... But all that hang on the hope of affording **you CONNECTION with God - from exactly where you are at.**

During Advent we anticipate Jesus being born into this world - as well as God being unexplainably born in our hearts - moment by moment - breath by breath... an ongoing birth. I know this year, I've needed to revisit this mystery and truth to **ground myself in God's presence** many times a day - because it has been a real practice to not "lose heart."

So I want to walk us through a practice this morning **that gives attention to our hearts** - and integrates our mind, body, and spirit. Inspired by the sermon that Pastor Lydia will give in just a few moments called, "Waiting for the Heart."

This is a spiritual practice called the Prayer of the Heart.

#### **Practice: Prayer of the Heart**

*We are going to utilize the wooden hearts and 'writing utensil' found on the outside of the glass doors - that hopefully you were able to grab on your way in... if you didn't get a chance, you can start moving that way now, and somebody will meet you with those materials.*

*This practice*, called the Prayer of the Heart - **aligns with our breath.**

And It consists of two simple phrases (that you'll create), one said on our inhale and one said on our exhale.

**The beauty of this prayer is the way it stays with us -as close as our very breath -all day, all week, all through this Advent season - or even for a lifetime if we allow it.**

#### **The Exercise**

- Invite you to take on a prayerful posture
- Whatever that looks like for you - maybe to close your eyes. Or drop your shoulders, relax into your chair a bit...

**Pre-Check-in:** Take a moment to consider the state of your heart.

You may literally want to take a pulse on the state of your heart.

Or just a hand over your heart..

Maybe it's beating really fast/racing -

Maybe your heart feels Distracted? Troubled? Fearful? Stressed.

Maybe the state of your heart is steady at this moment, it feels Ok? Content? **At peace.**

\*Take a minute to check in.

Take a couple of deep breaths.

1. **What is your longing for life with God at this moment?** Try suspending judgment of whatever your longing is, and instead looking at what's at the base of that desire.  
What is it that you long for with God?

Give that longing a short phrase. For example, if my deep desire is to feel more settled in who I am and who God is - and less pulled around on the strings of someone else's expectations....

Then my phrase would be "**settle.**"... Just try to make your phrase as short as possible.

### **WRITE THIS LONGING ON ONE SIDE OF YOUR WOODEN HEART**

2. **What is your name for God right now?** Choose whatever name seems to fit best for you. Some examples include: Jesus, Wisdom, Mother, humble, gentle one, or Mystery, **Love.** Be as creative as you want to be. But again, keep the name rather short.

### **WRITE THIS NAME FOR GOD ON THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR WOODEN HEART**

This heart now holds the prayer of your heart. Now let's move it through your body - so that you can access it in the days to come.

3. **Combine your name for God, with your longing.**  
For example, if my longing is "settle" and the name I choose for God is "**Love**", my prayer of the heart might be "**Settle, in LOVE.**"  
Spend a few moments coming up with your two-part prayer.

Begin to say—either aloud or silently—your phrase. "Settle, in Love." "Settle, in Love."

On your inhale draw in your longing and on your exhale breathe out the name of God. (or vice versa.)

If we had more time - you could spend several minutes breathing this prayer.

Make it your own. (letting it roll through you)

**Allow God to inhabit this prayer.**

**Allow the love of God to fill you and surround you.**

If you want you can hang this prayer of your heart - on the tree just outside of the glass doors, on your way out today. We all throughout Advent will have a tree that displays our collective prayers.

**Prayer:**

God - thank you that you fill our hearts with strength to love you - ourselves - and our neighbors - with all of our body, mind and spirit... may this be the binding force of our days, that's so deep within and so constant and steady as our breath. **The prayer of our hearts - that stirs in us with every beat. - Amen.**

**COMMUNION:**

No prerequisites - all are welcome

Gluten free option

**Your love would be made more visible in and through us.  
Filling our hearts with your life/ your sustenance..**

Let's eat and drink together:

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. [Amen.]

The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation/freedom. [Amen.]

Source: <https://cac.org/mind-body-heart-weekly-summary-2020-02-22/>