

LENT 2023
LISTEN

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



The 2nd Sunday of Lent
Finding Your Breath: Listening to Our Bodies

Prelude

Supplication

Gathering—Come and rest. Come and listen. Lay the fullness of your lives before our Maker.

Music Refrain: *Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 1*
Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we may see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

The holy scriptures connect the breath of God with our own aliveness—God blew breath into us at creation and we continue to breathe all of creation in and out of our bodies constantly. The early church also believed that breath and Spirit were one in the same. How might the meditative practice of paying attention to our breath be, in and of itself, a prayer of connection to God? When we embrace our bodies as the holy vessel of God, we become even more our true selves—which has been there all along.

Music Refrain: *Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 2*
Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

A Time of Prayer— As a fire is meant for burning, so we are meant to love you with every breath. Help us to know that any time we want to know your Spirit, we have only to tune into the breath of life which comes from you... We join this prayer with all those offered during this time with you, and we pray together the prayer of Jesus:

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Special Music

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God), violin solo, Collin Bennington

Listening—Our worship today is focused on the breath of God, the sigh of the Spirit. As we carve out time in our worship today to practice listening, to sit in the silence, you may want to pay attention to your breath this time. Notice the rhythm of your breathing, how your body responds with each inhale and exhale. Your breath is cleansing. It is life-giving. If there is too much chatter in your mind as you seek to listen you might focus in on this: *Take a deep breath, all the way into the far corners of your lungs...fill up your breath...fill up your spirit. Then let it empty all the way out, long and slow...Let it all go and take with it the toxins of your life...*

Silence

We Hear God's Word

Romans 8:26-28, 38-39 (NRSV)

The scripture in this series will be done in an abridged "lectio divina" format—which means "divine reading." We will hear the scripture read once and then we will let that resonate for a bit. You can think about what words or phrases stood out to you. After a few moments, we will hear the scripture read again.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Meditation

"Finding Your Breath: Listening to Our Bodies"

Hymn*Breathe on Me, Breath of God, 461***We Gather at the Table**

Set Your Place at the Table—Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it. Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So, gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

Our Invitation—Before Jesus was to breathe his last breath, he gathered together his friends to celebrate God’s goodness at the table, offering blessing, forgiveness, and grace. Let us gather at this table to listen once again for the mercy of God.

A Prayer for Transformation—O God, we all too often wish to go our own way, maintain control, and rely on our own strength rather than trust that you will provide. Forgive us in our unwillingness to live by faith or to not trust you with providing all that we need for the journey. May God’s mercy surround our weaknesses with grace for restoring us to hope everlasting.

Assurance of Grace— Friends, the call of God does not leave us isolated and condemned on a road of uncertainty, fear, and mistakes made. God’s unending love and compassion is for all whose burdens are heavy and whose weary journey brings tears. May the tender arms of God carry you forth in strength. God has not come to condemn, but to offer a healing salve for our wounds. We welcome God’s healing and salvation through Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Words of Institution— On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, we remember...we offer ourselves...we proclaim God’s love...

Blessing Our Meal—God of light and love, consecrate this holy meal. Pour out your blessings on it that in these sacred moments we might receive your light. May your presence in this bread and in this cup alight in us a faith renewed. Amen.

We Share the Bread and the Cup – As you eat the bread, remember, “This is the body of Christ broken for you.” Take and eat. As you drink the cup, remember, “This is the blood of Christ shed for you and the forgiveness of sins.” Take and drink.

We Give Thanks—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior’s presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ’s body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.`

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—In the beginning, God breathed the gift of life into dust, and created this wondrous world we live in. From those first moments of life in the garden, God has called us to be stewards of all we have been given. With generous hearts, let us bring to God our gifts that together we might care for all we have been given and all we have been called to do.

March Benevolence—God’s Bounty Food Pantry

Doxology

We Give Thanks—Breathe your Holy Spirit, O God, into these gifts that they might add to the abundance of life you call us to. Breathe your Holy Spirit, O God, into all who give that by our generosity our spirits might be nurtured and enriched. Amen.

Hymn

I Need Thee Every Hour, 476

Benediction—Listen every day until we meet again. Get quiet enough to hear the still small voice and to find your own. And may the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you all. Amen.

Postlude

Moderator Pomposa