

## The Practice of Centering Prayer

“Imagine a circle traced on the ground  
and in its center a tree sprouted  
with a shoot grafted into its side.

The tree finds its nourishment in the soil  
within the expanse of the circle,  
but uprooted from the soil it would be fruitless.

So think of the soul  
as a tree made for love  
and living only by love.

The circle in which this tree's root,  
the soul's love,  
must grow is true knowledge of herself,  
knowledge that is joined to me,  
who like the circle have neither end nor beginning,  
yet never leaving the circle.

So the tree of charity  
is nurtured in humility  
and branches out in true discernment. To me this  
tree yield's the fragrance of glory  
and praise to my name,  
and so it does what I created it for  
and comes at last to its goal, to me,  
[God].....everlasting life....”

~St. Catherine of Siena



## **Centering prayer** FAMILIARIZES US WITH GOD'S FIRST LANGUAGE ~ **SILENCE.**

*The AWFUMC Spiritual Formation Team, comprised of trained Spiritual Directors, is committed to renewing the Contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday active life. We encourage every practice leading to Christian Contemplation. We develop and facilitate resources and programs to further the spiritual growth and transformation of Christians.*

*We recognize that a mature fruit of Centering Prayer is a deepening, caring response to the needs and rights of the human family and an ever increasing respect for the integrity of all creation.*

**Centering Prayer** is not a withdrawal from commitment of service,  
rather it is a spiritual nurturing for those committed to service.

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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FORMATION**

*Set aside a time for silence...*

## CENTERING PRAYER

Be still and know that I am God  
Psalms 46:10

*Resting in the Presence of God*

*A Contemplative practice for everyone*



*...when you pray, go into your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*  
Matthew 6:6

*Courtesy of the ALABAMA-WEST  
FLORIDA UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH CONFERENCE*  
Spiritual Formation Leadership Team

## Introduction to **Centering Prayer**

This prayer serves many functions. It brings our attention to the fact that God is present, making 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 with God.

The practices of **Centering Prayer** are modeled on ancient prayer practices of the Christian contemplative heritage. Christ prayed in this manner in the Garden of Gethsemane and other times when he would go away for a while, as we see in scripture. Jesus encourages us to close our eyes and enter our Heart's Secret Room; there to abide for a while like a weaned child on its Mother's breast. . . or as Mother Teresa said, "I always begin my prayers with silence, for as blood is to the body, silence and prayer are to the soul, and it brings us closer to God."

Centering Prayer prepares us to receive the gift of God's Trinitarian presence. We do this by resting with God in our most inner space. Christ centered in its focus, this form of prayer emphasizes prayer as a personal relationship with God. At the same time, it is a rich and updated form of discipline to foster and serve this relationship by a regular, daily practice. This method of prayer is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to intimate, wordless communion with Him.

Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer; rather it casts a new light and depth of meaning to all prayer and facilitates the movement from more active modes of prayer -verbal, mental or affective prayer – into a receptive prayer of resting in God. In Centering Prayer, the heart opens towards the invisible, but always present-One.

## **METHOD** of Centering Prayer

**1. Give God consent:** *this is a prayer of consent. When we practice it, we consent to God's presence and His working within us in our life. We do this at the beginning of each sitting.*

**2. Choose a sacred word:** *when you first begin centering prayer, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you choose a sacred word that helps you gently return to centering prayer when your mind wanders. It can be a name of God, or any other word that works for you, i.e. Jesus, Spirit, Abba, Shalom, Yes, Love, Presence and so on. Do not change it during the prayer period.*

**3. Sit comfortably:** *sit in a comfortable chair, back straight, feet comfortably spaced on the floor. Ensure your body is relaxed. Close your eyes & let go of whatever is going on around & within you.*

**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 in God's Presence. When thoughts\* arrive, your only active part is to return gently to your inward sacred word. As your prayer time continues, even the word may fade or disappear from your mind.*

**5. After 20 minutes:** *Bring your attention to your body, and then slowly bring your attention back into the room, bringing the peace of silence into daily life.*

*\*thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images & reflections*

## **What is Centering Prayer?**

### **Centering Prayer:**

- ~is a Christian method – not an end in itself – of silent communion with God without attachments to words and images or thoughts
- ~is a way of cultivating a deeper relationship with God
- ~is a way to quiet the mind while maintaining alertness
- ~is a spiritual path to transformation with habitual faithfulness to this 20 minute silent prayer 2 times a day
- ~is an exercise of faith, hope and selfless love
- ~is a deepening of faith in God's abiding presence
- ~is simply resting in God & is refreshing
- ~is experiencing God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking
- ~principal fruits are experienced in daily life & not during the prayer period
- ~is designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by preparing us to receive this gift

*Silence is the bridge to the soul*

### **How do we develop an awareness of this inner silence?**

Thomas Keating asserts "Just as we need food, rest, sleep, so also we need moments of interior silence because they bring the deepest kind of refreshment."

Centering Prayer assists us to enter into this deeper attribute.

Recommended / Optional Reading:  
**Open Mind, Open Heart**, by Thomas Keating