

Centering Prayer at St. Paul's, Port Townsend
Monday-Wednesday-Friday 9:00 am-9:30 am

"In the experience of silence, especially if it is deep, you may experience at times a certain pure awareness. Even if it is brief, you are in contact with That Which Is, and this Reality is obviously in love with you." Thomas Keating

Centering Prayer at St. Paul's began in the spring of 2020, and all are welcome to join us. Participants access centering prayer via a Zoom link that is on St. Pauls' web site at www.stpaulspt.org.

The primary focus of St. Paul's Centering Prayer is to provide a regular time and supportive structure for the practice of contemplative prayer.

A simple formula is used:

- Music maybe shared as attendees gather
- Physical preparation – body and breath
- A reading
- Chimes to lead into 20 minutes of silence
- Chimes to signal the end of the silence
- A second reading
- The Lord's Prayer
- Sending Forth

Five minutes before the start of the session (8:55 am) audio of chant music may be available to begin the prayer preparation process. The music of Hildegard works well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahqq3dH1Q14>

At 9:00 am the facilitator begins with a brief welcome and participants greet one another.

After microphones are muted, the facilitator leads the group through a relaxation process, inviting participants to pay attention to their bodies through small movements. Attention is paid to areas in the body that seem tense, ache, or are in need of some healing prayer, love and light, remembering that the body will serve to support the time of prayer.

The group then focuses on taking three slow deep cleansing breaths, inhaling through the nose, pausing, then exhaling through the mouth, and pausing at the end of the exhalation.

The facilitator offers a brief prayer, bible verse, reading or poem to lead into the silence. Following the reading, the facilitator rings a chime slowly, three times. When the sound dissipates, the microphone is muted and 20 minutes of silence begins.

Centering Prayer can include a “sacred word.” Some participants do use a sacred word in the silence.

At the end of 20 minutes of silence, the facilitator unmutes and rings the chime, slowly, three times. A second brief reading is offered.

The group is then invited to share in the Lord’s Prayer, in whatever version they prefer. At the end of the Lord’s Prayer, participants are invited to unmute for a brief time of conversation and mutual blessings for the day ahead.

As participants become more familiar with centering prayer they are encouraged to begin sharing facilitation opportunities. Facilitators have differing styles and differing preferences for types of music, readings and prayers.

Because we have a group who meets together regularly, we don’t repeat instructions about Centering Prayer at each session. New participants are encouraged to view these centering prayer basics on St Paul’s web site.

The benefits of Centering Prayer are best gleaned through regular practice. A set time for Centering Prayer, with a group, offers support in this spiritual practice. Zoom makes gathering for Centering Prayer easy.