

Written & contemplative prayer practices



This week we continue with the “choose your own adventure” approach to prayer practices.

Firstly, there are some suggestions for practices that use writing as an aid to prayer, including journaling. Secondly, some suggestions about more contemplative practices such as Breath Prayer, meditation and Taizé prayer, including the opportunity to practice these in community along with the SPACE Contemplative Community, who meet at Scots Heidelberg every Thursday night ([live on Facebook](#)).

You might like to try one or all of these practices, or you might prefer to continue with the Lectio Divina practice from week 1, or the Examen practice from week 2.

Prayer journaling

“The ongoing nature of a journal catalogues the journey of a soul into God.” There are as many different ways to prayer journal as there are people. You don’t need to journal every day or even every week. Find the rhythm of journaling that suits your phase and stage of life.

Spiritual journaling exercises

1. As you read magazines, newspapers or surf the net, cut out or clip articles or photos that touch your heart. Paste into your journal. Use these clippings to help you pray and join in God’s care for the world.
2. Develop a journal for quotes, poetry and Scripture that has touched you. Reflect on these words and their significance to you.
3. If you enjoy art, create a collage journal. Express your thoughts and feelings to God through pictures, textures and colours.
4. Keep a prayer journal: record requests, prayers and answered prayers.
5. Use your journal as a place for your unedited thoughts, feelings and reactions.

Breath prayer

Breathing is an unconscious thing. Breath prayer reminds us that God is the oxygen of the soul, and we need to breathe God all day long. It is in God that we “live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) In breath prayer we are reminded that God is closer to us than our own breath.

Breath prayer or “prayer of the heart” has been practiced in the church for millennia. The Eastern Orthodox Church in particular has seen breath prayer as a way of living out Paul’s instruction to “pray without ceasing.”

To practice breath prayer, ponder the nearness of God. Settle deeply into the truth that Christ is in you. Deeply breathe in, repeating any name of God that is dear to you. As you exhale, voice a deep desire of your heart. The brevity of the prayer allows it to be repeated over and over throughout the day.

Breath prayers to try

breathe in “Abba,” breathe out “I belong to you.”

breathe in “Healer,” breathe out “speak the word and I shall be healed.

breathe in “Shepherd,” breathe out “bring me home to you.”

breathe in “Holy One,” breathe out “keep me true.”

breathe in “Lord,” breathe out “here I am.”

breathe in “Jesus,” breathe out “have mercy on me.”

“breath of life, breathe on me.”

Choose a fragment of scripture that is meaningful to you, and use that as your breath prayer.

Photography as Prayer

These days everyone has a camera in their pocket in the shape of a phone. Some of us also have proper photographic equipment. Take some time – wander amongst nature – or anywhere that you are – and take a photo. Let the moment that your press the shutter be your “amen.”



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Written & contemplative prayer practices



Take some time and reflect upon the images you have taken, and what God may be saying to you through them.

A Photography as Prayer reflection

Joy

When every click of the shutter is an “Amen”, then finding a few gems among the pictures you have taken is pure gift.

Like getting an unexpected present, which opens to something delicate and precious beyond your imagining.

When a hummingbird flew straight towards me out of the bird bath, I knew there was no possible way I could focus fast enough, knew that none of the pictures I was hastily snapping could possibly turn out.

I was wrong. Gorgeously, breathtakingly wrong. And then the thanksgivings begin anew.

Andee Zetterbaum, [Photography as Prayer](#)

Christian meditation

There are many forms of Christian meditation. These practices date back to the very earliest Christians, most notably the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 4th century. One well recognised form of Christian meditation is Centering Prayer.

Method for Centering Prayer

1. Set aside a minimum of 15 minutes.
2. Settle into a comfortable position.
3. Intentionally place yourself in the presence of God, in the centre of God's love.
4. Choose a simple word, phrase or verse from scripture that expresses your desire for God (eg: love, peace, grace, Jesus, Shepherd) Let this word focus your attention.

Take time to be quiet. It is not unusual for the first minutes to be filled with thoughts. If thoughts come in, acknowledge them, and then let them go. Gently return yourself to the centre of God's loving presence by repeating your word.

Resource: *Sensing God: Learning to Meditate during Lent*, Laurence Freeman OSB, SPCE London, 2015.

Taizé Prayer

Taizé is a sung form of liturgical prayer developed by the Taizé community in France. It involves a slow repetition of sung chant, bible reading and praying. It is often practiced in a community rather than as an individual prayer.

If you search the internet or Facebook, you will find local communities who offer Taizé style prayer services.

Prepared for the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches, Holy Habits Lenten Studies by Rev. Sandy Brodine.



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

