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Prayer

Be still and know that i am God

(Psalm 46:10)

Prayer is Encounter

Prayer is a time of encounter, when we open ourselves to God working within us.

Just like any other meeting, the ideal is to be relaxed, aware and attentive.

Pray as you can, not as you can't

Different people have different needs.

You may like to sit or kneel, or lie down to pray. Or you may prefer to be moving - walking perhaps, or knitting, or painting. You may like to pray regularly in the same place, perhaps sitting in a particular chair. You may like to light a candle or gaze at a picture, or hold a pebble, or listen to some quiet music.

You may find it helpful to read some words (not too many) such as a piece of Scripture, a verse of a hymn, or a poem. Or you may prefer simply to talk informally to God - but make time to listen too. Or you may wish to pray without words, simply waiting in silence in the presence of God.

There is no one right way to pray - you need to find out what works for you. Each way of praying may need practice before it seems natural: be patient.

*But the Lord was not in the wind..
the Lord was not in the earthquake..
the Lord was not in the fire.
And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

(1.Kings 19:11)

Finding Stillness

Stillness may be a way of preparing for prayer, or a kind of prayer in its own right. Some of these ways of coming to stillness may be helpful.

Find a relaxed, comfortable position in which to pray

Become aware of your body.

Beginning with the top of your head, be aware in turn of each part of your body. Pay attention to the feeling in each part. Remember God's presence in you, in your body, and in your feelings; and remember that you are loved.

Become aware of sounds. Gently notice the sounds around you. Without straining, concentrate on each in turn. If you are distracted just acknowledge this to your self and go back to listening. Remember God's presence in these sounds, and in the people and activities they represent.

Become aware of your breathing. Don't alter the rate or depth of your breathing: just be aware of it. You may like to give your whole attention to each breath: in...out...in...out... Remember God's presence in your breathing. As you breathe in, accept God's love and life; as you breathe out, let go of anything that distracts you.

A time of prayer

You may find it helpful to follow a structure such as this.

1. *Preparing to pray*

- Take a moment to get ready for this time with God. How are you feeling?
- What do you want to ask from God? Peace? Openness? Forgiveness? Generosity?
- Are there some familiar words that express this for you?

2. *Beginning prayer*

- Choose a place for prayer.
- Make yourself comfortable.
- Become still.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for help as you pray

3. *Prayer*

4. *Finishing prayer*

- Quietly bring your time of prayer to a close.
- Make a simple prayer using words from your heart.
- Finish by saying a prayer such as the Lord's prayer, or making a closing gesture such as the sign of the cross.
- Give thanks for this time with God.
- Slowly leave the place where you have been praying

5. *Reviewing your prayer*

Slowly recall your time of prayer, just as you might think back over time with a friend.

- Was it good to be at prayer, or not? In what ways?
- How did you feel during the prayer?
- Did you feel that God asked anything of you?
- Is there anything you want to return to in your next prayer time?

(You may like to keep a note of this review.)



A Prayer for stillness

*God of stillness and creative action
Help us find space for quietness today,
That we may live creatively,
Discover the inner meaning of silence
And learn the wisdom that heals the world.
Send peace and joy to each quiet place,
To all who are waiting and listening.
May your still small voice be heard
Through Christ in the love of the Spirit.*

Amen