

Advent Contemplative Practice for Parents – Sacred Reading

This Advent season we invite you to journey with others from around the [Minnesota Conference UCC](#) through an ancient spiritual practice of sacred reading.

Lectio Divina, Latin for “divine reading,” is an experiential way of reading that engages the mind, heart, and imagination. This practice encourages participants to listen beneath and through the text rather than reading for comprehension or information – wandering unhurriedly through the passage or story, noticing what captures one’s attention and touches one’s soul.

Each week of Advent will feature a poem/blessing by the writer and artist, [Jan Richardson](#), and Christmas will offer reflections by the writer and UCC minister, David Butler.

We hope you can make space amid the chaos and clamor of your days to pause – if only for a few moments – to be still. To simply be. Perhaps you will hear the whisper of the voice deep within your soul calling you to reconnect with the Source of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love entering our lives in the most unexpected and surprising ways.



The Practice

PREPARE

Remember that this practice, like all spiritual practices, is an opportunity to experience grace not judgement. This is not a project to “get right” or a task to “get done” but a gift of time and space for listening to one’s self and the whisper of the Spirit.

For this practice you will need to find a quiet place where you will be (mostly) undisturbed. You will also need to have this practice available on your phone, tablet, or computer, or have a printed copy handy. You may want to gather a few additional materials to help you fully engage the practice: a journal or paper, pens/pencils with which to write or draw, and a single candle or an Advent wreath with candles.



CENTER



Settle in and get comfortable in your quiet place. Light your single candle or Advent candles, if you have them. Spend a few moments looking into the flickering light. Be still and aware of the sacred breath within you. Take three deep, mindful breaths. Rest in the gift of this moment.

READ & REFLECT: LISTEN

Read the week’s text, preferably aloud. Listen for a word or phrase that draws your attention. When you have finished reading the text, pause for at least a minute of silence. As you rest in the silence, repeat that word or phrase over and over again to yourself. You may find it helpful to write or draw the word repeatedly in a journal.



READ & REFLECT: PONDER



After holding the moment of silence, prepare to read the text again. Before you begin reading, ask yourself the question, “How does this text intersect or connect to my life?” Read the text slowly, preferably aloud. After you finish reading, spend 2-3 minutes (or more) of silence reflecting on how this text may be speaking to your life in this moment. If it is helpful for you, spend this time writing or drawing in a journal.

READ & REFLECT: WONDER

As you prepare to read the text a final time, ask yourself the question, “What invitation is coming to me through these words?” Read the text slowly. After you finish reading, spend 3-4 minutes (or more) of silence listening to discover the Spirit’s invitation or encouragement for your life. You may choose to spend this time of reflection writing or drawing in a journal.



PRAY



As you finish your time of reflection and/or journaling, allow yourself to once again become still and aware of the sacred breath within you. Take three deep, mindful breaths, and pause to rest in this moment. During these final moments of silence, you may want to offer a brief prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of this time.

Week 2 - Peace

Blessing in a Time of Violence

Which is to say
this blessing
is always.

Which is to say
there is no place
this blessing
does not long
to cry out
in lament,
to weep its words
in sorrow,
to scream its lines
in sacred rage.

Which is to say
there is no day
this blessing ceases
to whisper
into the ear
of the dying,
the despairing,
the terrified.

Which is to say
there is no moment
this blessing refuses
to sing itself
into the heart
of the hated
and the hateful,
the victim
and the victimizer,
with every last
ounce of hope
it has.

Which is to say
there is none
that can stop it,
none that can
halt its course,
none that will
still its cadence,
none that will
delay its rising,

none that can keep it
from springing forth
from the mouths of us
who hope,
from the hands of us
who act,
from the hearts of us
who love,
from the feet of us
who will not cease
our stubborn, aching
marching, marching

until this blessing
has spoken
its final word,
until this blessing
has breathed
its benediction
in every place,
in every tongue:

Peace.

Peace.

Peace.

— Jan Richardson

<http://paintedprayerbook.com/2015/11/16/blessing-in-a-time-of-violence/>

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