

# Bulletin for Silence

## Business

### Chalice Lighting

Amid all the noise in our lives,  
we take this moment to sit in silence—  
to give thanks for another day;  
to give thanks for all those in our lives who have  
brought us warmth and love;  
to give thanks for the gift of life.

*Tim Haley*

### Sharing of Joys and Concerns

**Silence** – holding ourselves and each other in silent support

### Shared Readings

Not merely an absence of noise, Real Silence begins when a reasonable being withdraws from the noise in order to find peace and order in his inner sanctuary. *Peter Minard*

Silence was the first prayer I learned to trust. *Patricia Hampl*

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us. Not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing. *Rachel Remen*

Loneliness is the poverty of self; solitude is the richness of self. *May Sarton*

Silence gathered and struck me. It bashed me broadside. *Annie Dillard*

Words stand between silence and silence: between the silence of things and the silence of our own being, between the silence of the world and the silence of God. When we have really met and known the world in silence, words do not separate us from the world nor from other men, nor from God, nor from ourselves because we no longer trust entirely in language to contain reality.

*Thomas Merton*

Prayer begins by talking to God, but it ends by listening to Him. In the face of Absolute Truth, silence is the soul's language. *Fulton J. Sheen*

Our task is to listen to the news that is always arriving out of silence. *Rainer Maria Rilke*

## **Deep Sharing/Deep Listening**

### **Round 1**

How comfortable are you with silence? Respond briefly.

### **Round 2**

Share more deeply stories and experiences of silence as a result of your exploration of the preparation materials.

### **Round 3**

As time allows, share additional thoughts on silence or reflect on what others have shared.

## **Closing Words and Silent Meditation**

Let us begin a time of extended meditation with these words:

If waters are placid, the moon will be mirrored perfectly. If we still ourselves, we can mirror the divine perfectly. But if we engage solely in the frenetic activities of our daily involvements, if we seek to impose our own schemes on the natural order, and if we allow ourselves to become absorbed in self-centered views, the surface of our waters becomes turbulent. Then we cannot be receptive to Tao.

There is no effort that we can make to still ourselves. True stillness comes naturally from moments of solitude where we allow our minds to settle. Just as water seeks its own level, the mind will gravitate toward the holy. Muddy water will become clear if allowed to stand undisturbed, and so too will the mind become clear if it is allowed to be still.

*Deng Ming-Dao, from 365 Tao: Daily Meditations*

## **Song**

### **The Covenant**

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

# Facilitator Notes for Silence

## Business

### Chalice Lighting

Amid all the noise in our lives,  
we take this moment to sit in silence—  
to give thanks for another day;  
to give thanks for all those in our lives who have  
brought us warmth and love;  
to give thanks for the gift of life.

*Tim Haley*

**Sharing of Joys and Concerns** (each person about 2 minutes)

**Silence** – holding ourselves and each other in silent support (3 minutes)

### Shared Readings

Not merely an absence of noise, Real Silence begins when a reasonable being withdraws from the noise in order to find peace and order in his inner sanctuary. *Peter Minard*

Silence was the first prayer I learned to trust. *Patricia Hampl*

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us. Not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing. *Rachel Remen*

Loneliness is the poverty of self; solitude is the richness of self. *May Sarton*

Silence gathered and struck me. It bashed me broadside. *Annie Dillard*

Words stand between silence and silence: between the silence of things and the silence of our own being, between the silence of the world and the silence of God. When we have really met and known the world in silence, words do not separate us from the world nor from other men, nor from God, nor from ourselves because we no longer trust entirely in language to contain reality.

*Thomas Merton*

Prayer begins by talking to God, but it ends by listening to Him. In the face of Absolute Truth, silence is the soul's language. *Fulton J. Sheen*

Our task is to listen to the news that is always arriving out of silence. *Rainer Maria Rilke*

## Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

In the rounds of deep sharing and deep listening, pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure that all get to share at least once.

### Round 1 (each person about 2 minutes)

How comfortable are you with silence? Respond briefly.

### Round 2 (each person about 5 minutes)

Share more deeply stories and experiences of silence as a result of your exploration of the preparation materials.

### Round 3

As time allows, share additional thoughts on silence or reflect on what others have shared.

## Closing Words and Silent Meditation

Let us begin a time of extended meditation with these words:

If waters are placid, the moon will be mirrored perfectly. If we still ourselves, we can mirror the divine perfectly. But if we engage solely in the frenetic activities of our daily involvements, if we seek to impose our own schemes on the natural order, and if we allow ourselves to become absorbed in self-centered views, the surface of our waters becomes turbulent. Then we cannot be receptive to Tao.

There is no effort that we can make to still ourselves. True stillness comes naturally from moments of solitude where we allow our minds to settle. Just as water seeks its own level, the mind will gravitate toward the holy. Muddy water will become clear if allowed to stand undisturbed, and so too will the mind become clear if it is allowed to be still.

*Deng Ming-Dao, from 365 Tao: Daily Meditations*

Allow the group to sit in silence for several minutes. End by saying, "Go in peace."

## Song

### The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

## Preparation for Silence

Those who nurture a relationship with silence find that it enriches their lives. During meaningful times of silence we can find peace, healing, growth, and new insights into life. Many of us, however, find that we have little time for silence, and when we do find ourselves in a period of quiet, we do not know how make use of it.

Mellon Kennedy writes, "We live in a time and a culture where silence is often viewed as a void to be filled, particularly in groups. 'Silence is something like an endangered species,' remarks therapist Gunilla Norris. In our quest for efficiency, silence seems like a waste of the precious resource of time. We quickly become uncomfortable and jump to 'fix the problem' with words. Other times and other cultures have viewed silence differently. The mystical traditions of the world teach us that silence is to be cultivated. They teach us that our spiritual flowering is nurtured by spontaneous and intentional moments of silence, even in groups. Rather than an absence, silence is seen as full and rich. Silence can invite us to slow down, relax and go deeper. Perhaps that's actually why it can make us so uncomfortable."

Not only are times of silence rare in our lives, but even when they occur, it is hard for some of us to still our minds and receive the gifts of silence. In his book *Nurturing Silence in a Noisy Heart*, Wayne Oates says, "Silence is not native to my world. Silence, more than likely, is a stranger to your world too. If you and I are ever going to have silence in our noisy hearts, we are going to have to grow it . . . You can nurture silence in your noisy heart if you value it, cherish it, and are eager to nourish it."

Learning to still our minds is not an easy task. Thomas Merton observes in *No Man Is An Island*, "There are times, then, when in order to keep ourselves in existence at all we simply have to sit back for a while and do nothing. And for a man who has let himself be drawn completely out of himself by his activity, nothing is more difficult than to sit still and rest, doing nothing at all. The very act of resting is the hardest and most courageous act he can perform: and often it is quite beyond his power."

To prepare for the next Covenant Group meeting, you will explore your relationship with silence.

To begin with, give yourself an interlude of silence to see how it affects you. Read the following words and then give yourself several minutes to sit quietly.

Come and find the quiet center  
in the crowded life we lead,  
find the room for hope to enter,  
find the frame where we are freed;  
clear the chaos and the clutter,  
clear the eyes, so we can see  
all the things that really matter,  
be at peace, and simply be.

*Shirley Erena Murray*

Was the silence restful or uncomfortable? Did you experience serenity or did the details of everyday life fill your mind?

Now read the following thoughts on silence and reflect on how silence influences your life.

There is no need to go to India or anywhere else to find peace. You will find that deep place of silence right in your room, your garden or even your bathtub. *Elisabeth Kübler-Ross*

In quietness and confidence shall be my strength. *Isaiah 30:15*

Where shall the word be found, where the word resound? Not here, there is not enough silence. *T. S. Eliot*

My need to be alone is balanced against my fear of what will happen when suddenly I enter the huge empty silence if I cannot find support there. *May Sarton*

The mystery does not get clearer by repeating the question. Nor is it bought with going to amazing places. Until you've kept your eyes and your wanting still for fifty years, you don't begin to cross over from confusion. *Rumi, tr. Coleman Banks*

The mystical way is the inner way. Man tries to find in his inner life a connection with the "reality of the unseen," "the source of being," "the point of silence." There he discovers that what is most personal is most universal. *Carl Rogers*

Nothing in all creation is so like God as stillness. *Meister Eckhart*

Empty yourself of everything. Let the mind rest at peace. The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return. They grow and flourish and then return to the source. Returning to the source is stillness, which is the Way of nature. *Lao Tzu, tr. Gia-fu Feng and Jane English*

Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. *Henry David Thoreau*

## Questions to Ponder

1. How comfortable are you with silence? Does your mind relax into the stillness, or do you find it difficult to quiet your thoughts? Have you discovered ways to quiet your mind so that you can experience the silence?
2. Think of a time when a period of silence was meaningful to you. Describe how it affected you.
3. When do you have times of silence in your daily life? Do you seek these times, or do you try to fill them with thoughts and activities?
4. For some, it is necessary to be alone and in a quiet place to be able to experience silence. How does this relate to your experiences with silence? How have you created moments of silence during your everyday busyness?
5. If silence is valuable to your growth and well-being, how can you build more quiet time into your life and make the time you have more meaningful?