

St Peter's Church, East Blatchington  
Contemplative Prayer & Meditation Group



A Breathing Space gathering runs like this

Welcome

*from the leader*

Introduction

*from around the group*

Reading / Poem

*a reading or poem to  
inspire and set the tone*

The silence begins

*a bell rings*

We keep silence

*each use the practice  
best suited to them*

The silence ends

*a bell rings  
Compline hymn is read*

The Peace

*we share the peace  
with one another*

Departure

*we leave when ready*

# *What is Breathing Space?*

“Enter into yourself, leave behind all noise and confusion.  
God speaks to us in the great silence of the heart”  
- St Augustine

St Peter's has been a quiet sanctuary in this parish for hundreds of years. People often come into this church and sense the peace of her hallowed walls for a few moments. The *Breathing Space* group will deliberately seek to dwell deeply in that same place by keeping a contemplative and meditative silence in the sanctuary together.



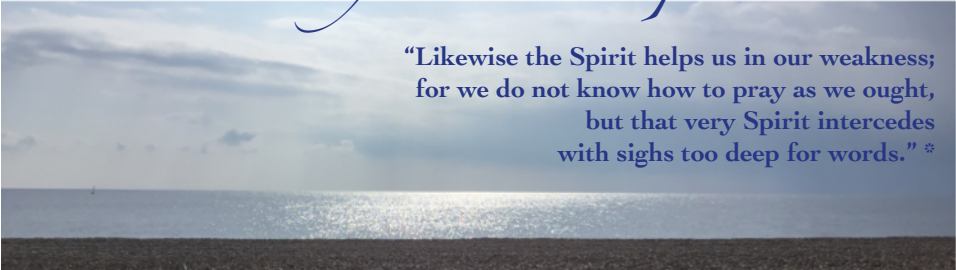
In keeping silence we seek to clear and calm the thoughts and whispers ('monkey-chatter') that prevent us from connecting with the ground of our being, - our spiritual self, the inner voice of Christ, the source of divine love. Breathing Space draws from contemplative traditions to gather and hold one another in the transformative presence and love of God.

We meet as a group and sit in a semi-circle around a candle or display in the heart of the church. We do this to symbolise that we are all held in equality and so that we can see each other. A circle also easily expands to include others. Practicing contemplation as a group enables us to hold one another and to share in the experience as a praying community.



# Methods of Contemplation

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*"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness;  
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,  
but that very Spirit intercedes  
with sighs too deep for words." \**

The aim is to clear our ordinary thinking by using a repeated practice and returning to it whenever thoughts arise. Space and stillness begin to emerge with practice. We don't think about the method we are using, as it is an anchor in place of the other thoughts. Thoughts will creep in, but remembering to return to the practice is key.

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## A Prayer Word

Some people choose a 'holy' word and then gently repeat it in their minds, trying to locate it on either the in or out breath. Words such as 'Amen', 'Love', 'Peace', 'Abba', 'Beloved', 'God', 'Jesus', or any other which feels right and good for you will work for this practice. Just gently repeat it trying to avoid any mental commentary.

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## Following the Breath

This meditation focuses on the breath. It simply brings the mind into a pattern of following the breath. Feeling it go in and feeling it go out. Some people imagine light going in and dark going out as a way of purifying thought and intention. Whenever thoughts wander, return to the breath.

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## The Jesus Prayer

For centuries in Christianity this prayer has been used by many as a centering prayer. 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'. This prayer is repeated in the mind in a rhythmic pattern alongside the breathing. When thoughts creep in, gently return to the prayer.

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# Helping Contemplation

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We have a number of senses and while contemplation engages the mind, some people engage their other senses to aid their practice.

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## Posture

Good posture aids contemplation because it helps to ground the body, leaving the mind free to develop the practice. Feet together on the floor, back straight, pelvis at a right angle to the legs tends to be the traditional posture. It should be comfortable rather than rigid, and upright rather than slouched. This lets the breath flow more freely and deeply.

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## Eyes Open or Closed?

Many practice meditation with their eyes closed, but others prefer to practice by keeping their gaze on something. A candle or an Icon are often used in this way, as can watching nature.



## Hands

Some people like to hold their hands in a particular position (e.g palms up, middle finger connected to thumb). Others like to use a finger labyrinth, or beads - each bead marking each repeated breath, word, or phrase.

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## Practice

Contemplation develops with practice. Regular practice will reveal the method, position and style that works best. At first aiming for just five-ten minutes, a few times a week, is realistic and achievable. Journalling your experiences can help too. If home is too busy, feel free to use the church!

*NB: If at first you find that your head seems too noisy and busy ... don't give up! This is a good sign, because it shows that your mind is acknowledging what is happening and resisting. Be gentle and kind to yourself, and try to do a little as often as you can.*