

# Christian Prayer 1a

## *Using our breathing to become still before God.*

### *We are body and spirit; spirit and body*

Many techniques that can help us prepare for prayer (or be used as a form of prayer in their own right) make use of our bodies.

We are spirit and flesh, but at times we can quite neglect one or other of these aspects of ourselves. Sometimes – and perhaps especially when we are being ‘religious’ – we can forget we have bodies, are embodied spirit. At other times our bodies can dominate, and we forget our spiritual dimension.

Religious traditions across the world make use of simple techniques of attending to our bodies to integrate our whole self and enter into a meditative state. These techniques are available to Christians too, so that we can experience our spirit at home in our God-given bodies as we seek to be ourselves before the living and loving God.

### *A stillness exercise ★*

*I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41.10)*

**Beginning the exercise.** Sit comfortably – legs uncrossed; feet flat on the floor; back straight; arms by our sides; and our hands comfortable on our laps...

- And now let's notice our breathing. Are you breathing heavily or gently? Don't change it, just notice it...
- Are you breathing through your nose or your mouth? Again don't change it, just notice it...
- Can you feel your breath as you breathe out? If you can, notice it, just be aware of it...
- And for a while, for just a minute (*or the leader's choice of time*) let's be attentive to our breathing. Not changing it, just noticing it.... Our breathing out and our breathing in...
- Now, as you breathe in, you might like to imagine that you are breathing in the love of God who gives you life. Breathing in the mercy of God who calls you to the fullness of life... Breathing in the love of God, and breathing out whatever is not of God...
- Not changing the rhythm of our breathing, not breathing more deeply but just as you are, aware of breathing in the love that God has for you and breathing out whatever is in you that is not of God... Breathing in the love and life of God and breathing out the opposite.
- Let's do this quietly just for two minutes (*or a time of the leader's choosing*)

**Bringing the exercise to a close.** *People can sometimes be very relaxed because of this technique. Bring the exercise to a close with a gentle announcement. A PowerPoint presentation has been prepared that includes the sound of a gentle bell - you can easily extract this to use as a stand-alone resource. It lasts 7 minutes. Allow 30 seconds or so after the bell, or your words, for people to come together again.*

- You might end the whole exercise by leading people in praying the ‘Glory be’.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit  
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.

- ★ The exercise is written as a script. You can read it to a class. But leave lots of pauses, to allow people to get comfortable, to notice how they are feeling etc. Maybe allow 10 seconds or more after each bullet point.

The accompanying PowerPoint includes the script read for you, (it lasts 7 minutes and includes the sound of a concluding bell.. All you need add is the closing ‘Glory be...’ When you are familiar with the technique you might like to delete the spoken version and just retain the slides.

