

Looking for God



Over Your Shoulder

Contemplative Practices in Everyday Life for
Older Adults – and to share with friends

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Older Adult Ministries
of The National Benevolent Association

Written by Dick Hamm, Paul Koch, Jan Aerie, &
Kimberly Weir. Edited and compiled by Paul Koch.

Introduction

You hold in your hands a gift - a gift of offerings written and collected by caring, faith-filled individuals. This booklet offers many entry points to prayer, contemplation, and meditation for your spiritual journey.

It all began with a group of twelve leaders from health and social service organizations, congregations, regions, and ecumenical partners from across the country, who gathered monthly for one year to discuss collaborative means for expanding ministries with older adults in communities and churches.

Their goal was to offer education and resources to congregations and communities regarding the concerns of older adults. The group's earliest commitment was to develop such a book as this – to reach out and touch the lives of all ages at key intersections in their days and experiences, joys and challenges.

We recommend that if you are using this booklet on your own to begin by reading the scripture as *lectio divina* – reading slowly and over again for three times before reflecting on the questions asked. What words or phrases jump out at you? If you are sharing this book with another, perhaps introduce the scripture after you read it and reflect together what the passage means to you before continuing. This booklet differs from other devotional materials in that the meditation reflection is not provided but emerges from you! Have a sacred journey!

We hope you will return to this booklet again and again, and also share it with others you love and care about.

Supplied by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
National Benevolent Association

<https://www.NBAcares.org/OAM-Resources>

Table of Contents

Part I - Meditations

Times of Light

Sunrise! And As You Wake	5
Enjoying a Meal	6
Being Outside	7
Connecting With Young People	8

Times of Shadow

When We Feel Alone and Unknown	9
When God Seems to Be Absent	10
In Times of Darkness	11
When We Are Dependent Upon Others	12
When I Am Treated Without Compassion by Care Givers	13
Experiencing Grief	14
The Mountains and Valleys	16

Times of Stillness in the In-between

While Sitting in Your Room – Surrounded by Silence	17
While Waiting for a Medical Appointment	18
When You are Distracted by Worry	19
Reflecting on Your Former Job or Career	20
Watching a Sunset and Preparing for Sleep	21
When Feeling Compassion for Others	22

Part II – Litanies, Liturgies, & Rituals

A Service of Release and Renewal to Share with Others	24
A Ritual on the Significance of Water and Rocks	26
A Labyrinth at Your Fingertip	27
Centering and Breathing Exercises	29
Smells and Bells – A Memory Exercise	30
Body Scan	31
Additional Readings and Meditation Resources	33
Contributor Biographies	34

Part I

Scriptures for Meditation, Personal Reflection, and Encouragement to Share with Another



Sunrise! And As You Wake



Scripture for Meditation

Because of the tender mercy of our God, the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide

our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79 ESV

Prompts for Reflection

1. Look at the sunrise or a shade streaming in from your window.
What peaceful thoughts come to mind?
2. Count how many colors you see.
3. To what do you look forward that may happen today?
4. What are the songbirds saying to you?
5. When have you felt God guiding your feet to peace, especially during difficult times.

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Say a word that speaks of the peace you feel this morning.
Alternate until all your peaceful words have been spoken.
- b. Share a story about when you woke up extra early and ventured to experience the morning.
- c. Is there a worry from yesterday that seems to have gone away?
Why do you think this happened?
- d. Have you experienced an Easter Sunrise Service, especially when it was still chilly? Tell of what you remember.

Prayer: Most Merciful God. May this new day bring hope and peace, especially when the night was unsettling and the hours seem long.

Guide my feet to where I need to travel. Amen

[PK]

Enjoying a Meal



Scripture for Meditation

God's gift to us is the happiness we get from our food and drink and from the work we do.

Ecclesiastes 3:13 CEV

Prompts for Reflection

1. Recall what favorite dishes your family liked.
2. Remember a celebration that brought the most family together.
3. As you taste what you are eating, does a memory come to you?
4. When during a time of Holy Communion did you feel extraordinarily blessed or find a sought-after peace?
5. Place yourself eating at your favorite restaurant or one's home. List everything on the table or on the walls that you see.

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Share from memory how to make your favorite dish or food.
- b. Tell when an unexpected guest showed up for supper.
- c. Did you grow your own vegetables in a garden or harvest your own meat on a farm? What are people missing today when they only buy food?
- d. Describe your favorite "comfort food." Why was it comforting?

Prayer: May the bounty of harvest nourish our body and soul. May what we accomplish today bring glory to You. Amen [PK]

Being Outside



Scripture for Meditation

*You make me lie down
in green pastures; you
lead me beside still
waters; you restore my
soul.*

Psalm 23:2-3a

Prompts for Meditation

1. Do you try to set aside time each day to go outdoors? What are your common excuses to not venture out? How do you typically feel when you return inside?
2. Close your eyes. Identify every sound that you hear.
3. Recall a childhood game you played with a bunch of neighborhood kids. What memories and feelings are recalled?
4. Create a “checklist” marking the arrival of a season. Such as sight of your first robin or a bud on a tree. What else is on your list?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Describe to a friend all the rules of a favorite childhood game and what usually happened when you played. Swap stories.
- b. Share what comparisons you have noticed in being outdoors in different decades of your life. What senses awaken?
- c. Share why you think the 23rd Psalm is a favorite of so many.

Prayer: Playful God, restore my soul through your Creation. Amen [PK]

Connecting with Young People



Scripture for Meditation

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.

Psalm 71: 17-18

Prompts for Reflection

1. Being with young people can be joyous and chaotic. How do you anticipate your time with them?
2. Is there a bond you feel when with children and youth?
3. How do you share who you are with them?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Ask some friends to tell about their recent experiences with children.
- b. Can you smile and laugh about their antics and your role in it?
- c. How might an enjoyable get together with young people be planned and programmed at your church?
- d. Does storytelling create a common bond across the generations?

Prayer: God of all ages, I love to share the exuberance of the young. They energize and exhaust me. Help us to connect in your love by sharing our stories together. Amem

[JA]

When We Feel Alone and Unknown



Scripture for Meditation

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my

tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. Psalm 139:1-4

Prompts for Reflection

1. Name three people who have *really* known you. How did it, or how does it, *feel* to be known so well?
2. What does God know about you? Your past? Your present? Your future? Your joys and pains? Your hopes?
3. How would you describe yourself to God? Do you think your understanding of yourself matches God's understanding of you?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Can you name a time when you realized God knows you better than you know yourself?
- b. Do you think the fact that God knows us better than we know ourselves is why God often has more grace for us than we have for ourselves?
- c. Name three ways in which you are now different from the time you were twelve years old. How did God figure into your changes?

Prayer: Searching God, as I rise up from this place, rise up in me. Amen

[DH]

When God Seems to Be Absent



Scripture for Meditation

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. Psalm 139:9-10 ESV

Prompts for Reflection

1. Read the above scripture passage slowly three times.
2. When have you felt the presence of God most strongly?
3. In what ways do you think God's presence might be expressed today?
4. How can you be more alert to God's presence today, so you don't miss it?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Share a time when it felt like you "*took the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea?*"
- b. Did you feel God's presence then?
- c. In what ways do you feel God's presence today?
- d. In what way might you represent the presence of God today for someone?

Prayer: My beloved hand-holder, when my thoughts seem to be on distant shores, you are closest. Help me not to let go! Amen [DH]

In Times of Darkness



Scripture For Meditation

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Psalm 139:11-12

Prompts for Reflection

1. What does darkness mean to you?
2. Do you sometimes fear darkness? If so, what is it about darkness that frightens you? How might darkness be a gift?
3. Do you sleep with a nightlight? Does that help you sleep? If so, why do you think that helps?
4. When have you taken a walk or ventured out in the dark when there was enough moonlight? Did you feel a "lunar energy?"

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Share a childhood memory of when you were scared of the dark.
- b. Have you felt God's comforting presence in the dark? If so, what was that like?
- c. Do you have a comforting prayer you repeat each night before you go to sleep? Are you willing to share it?
- d. Light a candle together in a dark space.

Prayer: God of Light, even in dark places you are there! Amen [DH]

When We Are Dependent Upon Others



Scripture For Meditation

Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and

someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." John 21: 18

Prompts For Reflection

1. In what ways are you dependent upon others for your daily life?
2. How does it make you feel to be so dependent? Grateful? Resentful? Perhaps some of both?
3. What are some things you do for yourself because you can and because you want to feel a sense of self-reliance?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. When else in your life have you willingly been dependent on others?
- b. How have you felt toward those upon whom you depended? Grateful? Resentful?
- c. How do you feel toward those upon you are dependent now? In what ways are these feelings the same or different?
- d. How do you express gratitude to those who help you now?
- e. Do you see the hand of God in those who help you now?

Prayer: Caregiving God, I am wholly dependent on you! Your grace, mercy, benevolent care and abiding presence are enough. Amen. [DH]

When I Am Treated Without Compassion by Care Givers



Scripture For Meditation

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is

the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18

Prompts for Reflection

1. Paul does not say “give thanks for all circumstances,” but give thanks in all circumstances? Why do you suppose he says “in” rather than “for”?
2. Are there those who are charged with taking care of you but who do so begrudgingly or in a mean-spirited way? How does this passage suggest you treat them in return?
3. Why do you think they might act toward you as they do? Does it have to do with how you respond to them, or is there perhaps something in their life that has injured them and continues to cause them pain?
4. Might a sweet spirit on your part melt their hardness of heart?
5. How might you pray for them?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Invite your care-giver to share something of themselves with you. Perhaps an important event or circumstance?
- b. What of your own story might you briefly share that would make you more visible to them and help them see that you care about them? Might you share from your life experiences what you think would be of interest to them? [DH]

Experiencing Grief



Scripture for Meditation

“The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Psalm 18:1

Prompts for Reflection

Every phase of life brings losses. When we graduate from school, we lose the daily interaction we had with our fellow students and we miss them. When we leave home to start our adult life, we lose the daily presence of our family of origin. When we choose to marry, we leave behind others whom we might have chosen. When we change jobs, we lose the camaraderie of those with whom we have worked. When we experience physical decline, we lose the ability to work and play as we always have.

1. Name five losses that you have experienced throughout your life.
2. What opportunities did these events create for you?
3. Did you feel separated or estranged from God for a time during these times of loss?
4. Did you eventually recover the sense of God’s presence and caring and, if so, how long did it take and was there anything you did to help recover it?

5. Elizabeth Kubler Ross names five “stages” of grieving”: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. During the overall grieving process, these five often reappear from time to time as we work our way through grief. Can you identify these “stages” in one or two of your own grief experiences?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Would you be willing to share your story of a significant loss with another person and also hear their story of a significant loss they have experienced in life?
- b. What opportunities in your life were made possible by such losses?
- c. In what ways do you experience God’s presence and caring in the face of life’s losses?
- d. Do you have unfinished grief that you could work through with a friend, chaplain, or pastor?
- e. Can you imagine a symbolic way to help you let go of your grief?

Prayer: God of Light, I open myself up for you to shine in my shadows.
Amen

[DH]

The Mountains and Valleys



Scripture for Meditation

...but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5

Prompts for Reflection

1. What low time in your life later brought you hope?
2. How have the valleys and peaks in your journey gone hand-in-hand? Does your suffering offer any lessons?
3. Do your mountaintop experiences show new perspectives?
4. How have you shared some of these lessons and experiences?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Ask your friends and family if they are more inclined to talk about their peaks or valleys.
- b. Discuss how sharing personal experiences might help us learn resilience.
- c. Invite a church group to draw their personal lifelines including some of the most significant peaks and valleys. Then share with the group.

Prayer: God, I pray to you when I am in the valley more often than when I am on the mountaintop. I am learning to be grateful for both and for the lessons they can teach me. Amen

[JA]

While Sitting in Your Room – Surrounded by Silence



Scripture for Meditation

Then the woman said to her husband, “Behold, now I know that the one who often comes our way is a holy man of God. Please let us make a small room upstairs and put in it a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp for him. Then when he comes

to us, he can stay there. II Kings 4:9-11

Prompts for Reflection

1. Look around for items you especially placed in your room. Recall with each why they are special. Who gave them to you?
2. What might be considered “clutter” – that which no longer provides purpose or meaning?
3. Close your eyes and listen to what sounds you hear in “silence.”
4. Have you preserved a room for someone special when they visit?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Exchange a precious item with a friend (even for just a while). Share why it is special and why you want your friend to have it.
- b. Create an *altar* on a side table, dresser top, or stand. What objects that are sacred to you might be placed on it to remind you of God’s presence? Compare and share what you selected.
- c. How do a friend’s items reflect who they are to you? Tell them.
- d. If you have stayed at a retreat center, you will have found that the room was sparsely decorated. Tell of a retreat you may have had. What might it have felt like resting in a very simple space.

Prayer: Come Lord Jesus, and stay with me and rest a while. Amen [PK]

While Waiting for a Medical Appointment



Scripture for Meditation

God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. God counts the stars by number, giving each one a name. Our Lord is great and so strong! God's knowledge can't be grasped!

Psalm 147:3-5 CEB

Prompts for Reflection

1. Take five slow deep breaths. Are you feeling calmer? Why is this?
2. Recall a time when you received joyous medical news. Did you worry in advance? How do those worries seem in comparison to the relief you felt?
3. When news wasn't great, do you remember the kindness, assurance, and help from medical staff, family and friends? What was it that they said or did that brought you through this?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Look around and see who else is in the waiting room. Can you gauge their condition or anxiety? Say a silent prayer for each.
- b. Who is sitting alone? Might you, and if you have companions, move next to this person to strike up a friendly conversation?
- c. Anticipate your medical consultation. Might you ask the nurse or doctor how they are feeling with a heavy patient load?

Prayer: Jesus, great physician and healer, help my encounter with worry or brokenness and teach me compassion for myself and all. Amen [PK]

When You are Distracted by Worry



Scripture for Meditation

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

II Timothy 1:6-7 NIV

Prompts for Reflection

1. The above scripture could be heard as “pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” But have you ever felt so exhausted that this was the last thing you could do? Where did you find strength?
2. Picture worry like the big boulder in the picture. What do you see happening to this “insurmountable hunk of granite?”
3. When has God remedied a situation almost like in the snap of the fingers? Was the remedy “that easy” or the worry exaggerated?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Take turns setting a timer for 5 minutes and say all negative and positive outcomes to what worries you. When all had a turn, move on to another subject of conversation.
- b. A comedy show had a recurring skit called “Debbie Downer,” where a woman spoke of the most outlandish devastations that situations cause. Tell of a *worry wart* who made you laugh.
- c. When had you needed to fan a campfire so the spark could flame and catch the wood on fire? Tell of such camping trips. What feelings did the “rugged outdoors” evoke? Was it fun?

Prayer: Thank you for sending your Spirit! We got this! Amen [PK]

Reflecting on Your Former Job or Career



Scripture for Meditation

Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish but you endure; they will wear

out like garments. You change them like clothing, and they pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. The children of your servants shall live secure; their offspring shall be established in your presence. Psalm 102:25-28 RSVUE

Prompts for Meditation

1. How do you respond to, "What did you do?" Is this the crux for relationship or the most crucial thing to understand about you?
2. How did you feel when you retired? Beyond the human doing, who were you being? Who are you becoming?
3. In how many ways were you "paid" for all that you provided?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Tell about your first job – perhaps that you found in high school. How do you think it may have helped shape you today?
- b. What was the worst or perhaps "shortest tenured" job you had? What made it so awful or brief?
- c. Name a physical object that is or was a symbol of your job or career that you left behind – perhaps to "discharge" the job.

Prayer: Your hands created me! I am wonderfully made. Amen [PK]

Watching a Sunset and Preparing for Sleep



Scripture for Meditation

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

Psalm 133:3 NIV

Prompts for Reflection

1. List everything that happened today that you loved.
2. Recall your childhood bedtime prayer routine. Who was with you? What posture did you take?
3. Meditate on each phrase of your favorite prayer. What is your prayer pattern before bed now?
4. Look or recall all the shades of color at sunset. Where else do you see these colors?

Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Share together the details of a sunset that you recall watching with someone you loved. What made it memorable?
- b. Why do you think sunsets are so peaceful? What synonyms for *peace* can you share with each other?
- c. Perhaps much of your life you shared your bed with another – even a pet. Give voice to the adjustment and loss one encounters sleeping in a bed now alone.

Prayer: Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Wake me with the morning light and lead me on a path that's right.

Amen

[PK]

When Feeling Compassion for Others



Scripture for Meditation

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

II Corinthians 1:3-4

Prompts for Reflection

1. Recall a time when someone showed great care for you.
2. What feelings did this evoke for you - warmth, great love, hope?
3. How might you show your care for another?
4. How does showing your care for another make you feel?

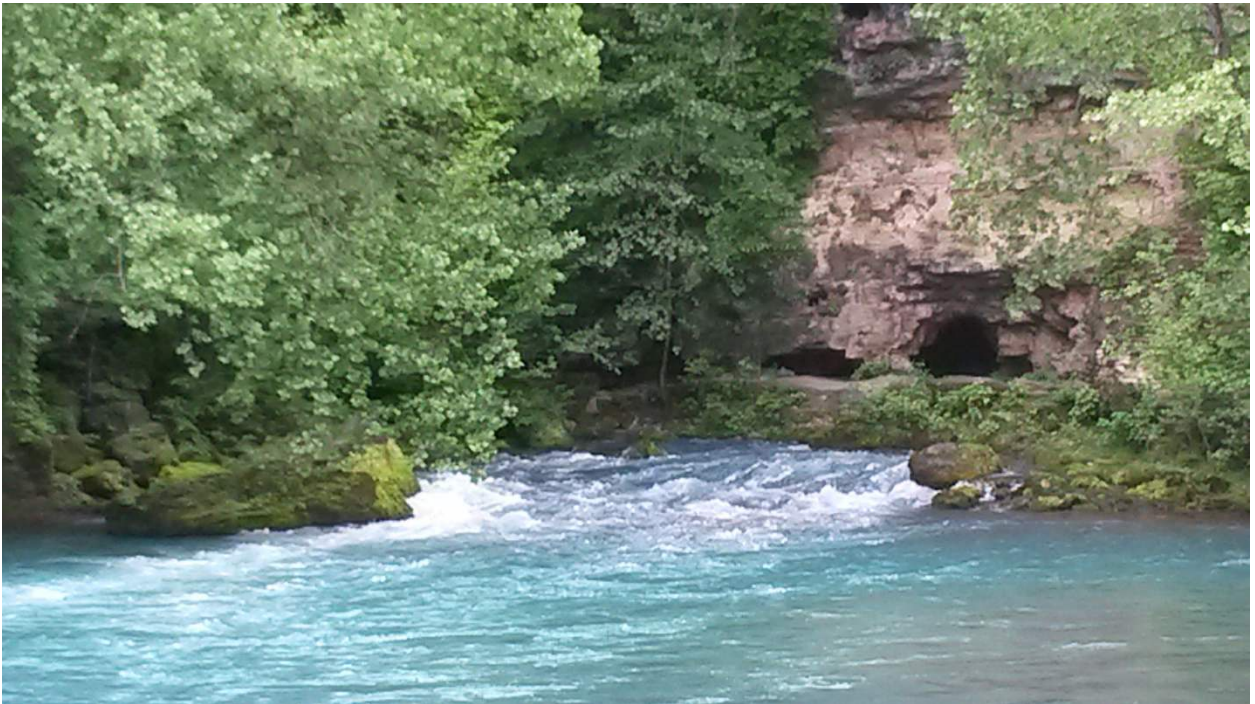
Encouragement to Share with Another

- a. Share a time of care with a friend.
- b. Ask another what makes them feel cared about.
- c. Create a group image of compassion in your community.
- d. Talk about expanding your compassion circle together.

Prayer: O God, I feel love in my heart today that I want to share. Thank you for this gift today, and for your immense love for me. Amen [JA]

Part II

Litanies, Liturgies, & Rituals



A Service of Release and Renewal to Share with Others



One: We come to this place today having spent time reflecting on all the ways God is still at work in our lives. We know that with change comes many challenges, and we recognize the value of naming all the ways things have changed - for the better and otherwise - over this last year.

Others: We acknowledge and accept the physical, emotional and spiritual changes in our lives.

One: We have learned the importance of taking the time to acknowledge our grief and sense of loss with these changes.

Others: We surrender our sorrow more fully to make way for more light and joy to enter in.

One: We recognize the importance of confession and forgiveness in our journey.

Others: We surrender the hurt we have felt from others, and we ask forgiveness for the hurt we have caused others.

One: We know that there are times we forget to trust in God's love and grace. We get focused on ourselves and our failings, and we forget we still have purpose.

Others: God, forgive us when we doubt our usefulness and our value to You.

One: And now, we take this time to claim our capabilities and proclaim all we are still able to do. We recommit ourselves in this moment to finding what is good within us and those around us.

Others: We know we can still make a difference in this world, when we trust and rely on You.

Prayer: Loving God of all, we know You love all your children. Remind us how precious we still are to You. Help us to take in stride the changes that come so that we can truly age gracefully. Lord, You said You came so we may not only have life, but have it abundantly. Help us not shortchange ourselves by wallowing in our grief and self-pity to the point we cannot see Your beauty and what is left for us to do. Open our eyes as we surrender to you! We ask this in Your name. Amen

[KW]

A Ritual on the Significance of Water and Rocks



[Preparation: When you are near a stream, or gather a bowl and fill it with water. Place a few precious pebbles or stones in it.]

We look at the rocks in the water and are reminded of several things:

No matter how rough the waters get, the rocks may toss and spin, but they are not destroyed. In fact, through the difficult waters, rough surfaces may become smoother. We are works in progress as well. When we allow a loving God to shape us during those difficult times, God can smooth our rough edges enabling us to be used more fully.

Water is a symbol of birth and rebirth. Some may remember their baptism and how coming out of the water symbolizes a new birth into a new life in Christ.

As you reach your hand into the water, I invite you to feel around to find a rock you like. Feel the weight of the rock as you lift it and feel the water drip off your hand as the rock emerges from the water.

Today begins a new chapter in your life! This is the chapter where you see change in the proper perspective because you are willing to continually surrender all things to the God of grace, mercy, love, hope and eternal life. Amen

[KW]

A Labyrinth on Your Fingertip



Labyrinths are ancient pilgrim paths. Whereas we might walk a mile and a half in a straight line, the same distance can be covered in a relatively small space outlining spiraling arcs and switchbacks. There perhaps is a labyrinth in your community, possibly on church grounds or at a hospital garden. One is invited to walk a labyrinth slowly and perhaps pause at a turn or longer stretch to meditate on abrupt changes or journeys in our life.

The internet will provide finger labyrinths that you can trace with your index finger while sitting still. A labyrinth is not a maze where you can get trapped or lost but resembles a journey to a spiritual center and return path.

Children love to go on small hikes to places of unknown adventure. What mysteries might be solved? When you played junior detective, you probably were fascinated with fingerprints and the understanding that they are unique for every person in the world. With magnifying glass in hand, a single print found on a glass or rail could be matched with a suspect.

Have you ever studied your fingerprint? I invite you to find a partner and invite them to take a magnifying glass, or perhaps a reader used for fine print in a magazine, and to hold it over your extended finger and with the other hand try their best to draw the contours of your fingerprint on a sheet of paper. The size should be exaggerated, perhaps filling an entire page. (There are no prizes for perfection; this is just for fun.) Do the same for them.

Later, in a moment of quiet, take your finger and follow the lines of your unique identity. As you slowly follow a pattern, reflect on your life.

- Do you remember a childhood adventure?
- Was there a mystery that you solved?
- Did an unknown person enter your life in a surprising way?
- Honor whatever comes to your mind....

Keep your fingerprint page handy for a few days. Consider the uniqueness of who you are! Count the imprints you have left in other people, at church, at work. You are a precious creation of God! [PK]

*So God created humankind in Gods' image,
in the image of God, God created them;
male and female, God created them.*

Genesis 1:27

Centering and Breathing Exercises



Take seven deep breaths, inhaling till your lungs expand fully. Release your breath twice as slowly. You might consider making this a *Yahweh Prayer*. Breathe in to “*Yah;*” release with “*Weh.*”



Concentrate on your breathing, being mindful of every breath. After a few breaths, pray Psalm 46:10 while still concentrating on breathing. First speak silently the entire phrase. With each repeating, lop off the last key word. Do this slowly.
[Attributed to Fr. Thomas Keating]

- *Be Still and Know that I Am God*
- *Be Still and Know that I AM*
- *Be Still and Know*
- *Be Still*
- *BE*

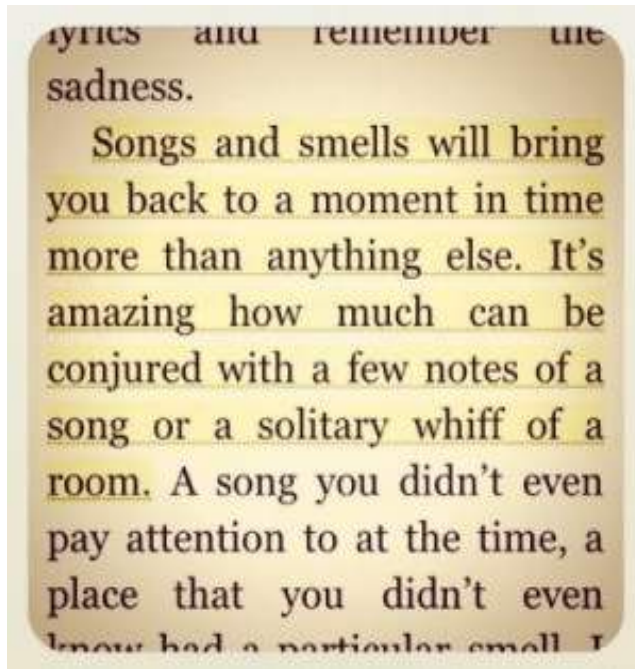


While breathing, extend your arms straight out. Hold for a few breaths. Raise your hands and arms above your head. Put your palms together in a praying posture. Lower your arms to

chest level. Nod your head toward your hands. Release your hands to hug your arms. Squeeze tightly as you embrace.

[PK]

Smells and Bells – A Memory Exercise



Scripture for Meditation

Come, dear lover— let's tramp through the countryside, then rise early and listen to bird-song. Let's look for wildflowers in bloom, blackberry bushes blossoming white, fruit trees adorned with cascading flowers. Love-apples drench us with fragrance, fertility surrounds, suffuses us, fresh fruits and preserves that I've kept and

saved just for you, my love. Song of Solomon 7 (portions)

Songs: Find a nostalgia radio station. There are other options such as a genre music provider through your cable TV, Sirius XM, music apps on your cell phone or computer, perhaps even old records or CDs you have. A friend can help you find a random selection of songs or hymns. As a familiar song is played, listen to the music and words thoroughly. When did you hear this before? What memories arise? What words or phrases of the lyrics do you especially recall?

Smells: Gather any number of spices from your kitchen cabinet or spice rack. If you are in a facility, kindly ask the activities director to let you borrow them. Perhaps this can be a group activity!



Randomly, open one lid at a time. Breathe in each scent. Reflect for a long while where you have smelled that fragrance before.



As you breathe in, what memory is triggered? Reflect on it.



If another is beside you, share what is remembered.

[PK]

Body Scan



Perhaps you had to go to a clinic for a body scan, where they put you in a very intimidating machine. This is not that!!! Let's look, feel and experience our innermost, beautiful parts of our body as God's gift.

Sit in an upright chair with both feet firmly on the ground with your hands resting on your knees. Take five slow and full deep breaths.

- We will start at the top of your head but first focus on the *aura* above your head – like the glory in medieval pictures of holy ones. Concentrate on the energy that surrounds your body.
- Feel this energy move into your cranium, like a gentle pat on the head. Take the pulse of all the neurons firing in your brain.
- Like a warm washcloth over your face, feel the cleansing of your forehead, eyes, cheeks, nose, lips and chin.
- Swallow this energy into your throat and neck.
- Remember a friend gently coming from behind you who provides a caressing shoulder rub. Feel this sensation down your arm, past your elbow to your hands. Wiggle each and all your fingers.
- Resume deep breathing as you absorb energy into your chest.
- Sit as quietly as you can and see if you can hear your heartbeat. Visualize how it is strongly pulsating in your body, giving you life. Trace the flow of blood from your lungs to your heart and the rest of your body.
- Follow a piece of food in your digestive system as it moves into your gut, stomach, and intestines.
- As your body sits in the hard chair, feel all the pressure at your waist and hips – how they hold and sustain you.
- “While we in the neighborhood...” Focus on your private parts – how they serve your body for health but also in forming your human condition, in reproduction, and sexual intimacy. Return to God any feelings of past awkwardness or trauma that you may have experienced in your sexual development and identity.
- Let your energy go down your legs. Even if walking is not easy or possible today. Try to wiggle or shake your legs.
- Perhaps you have had a hip or knee replacement. “New hardware” may be a part of your body. Consider how this miracle of science has served you, eased pain and made mobility possible.

➤ Lastly, tap your feet. How many miles do you think you've walked in your lifetime?* Give thanks for all the places you've been. *[PK]*

*The average adult will walk almost **75,000 miles** over their lifetime – the equivalent of traveling around the world **three times**. The average person (moderately active) takes around **7,500 steps/day**. If this was maintained daily through the age of 80, you will have walked about **216,262,500 steps** throughout your life. *[Wiki]*

Additional Readings and Meditation Resources

Meditation for Older People: A How-to Guide for Mindfulness Meditation Groups

by [Beaté Steller](#)

https://www.amazon.com/Meditation-Older-People-How-Mindfulness-ebook/dp/B0BX5HP2TN/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3MTBE2COQSHLJ&keywords=meditation+for+older+people&qid=1686757761&srefix=meditation+for+older+people%2Caps%2C83&sr=8-1

Live in Grace, Walk in Love. Bob Goff, 2019. Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Goff-Untitled-2-Bob/dp/1400203775/>

Fragments of Your Ancient Name: 365 Glimpses of the Divine for Daily Meditation. Joyce Rupp,

2011. Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/Fragments-Your-Ancient-Name-](https://www.amazon.com/Fragments-Your-Ancient-Name-Meditation/dp/1933495286)

[Meditation/dp/1933495286](https://www.amazon.com/Fragments-Your-Ancient-Name-Meditation/dp/1933495286)

Voices of Aging. Missy Buchanan, 2015. Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/Voices-Aging-Adult-Children-](https://www.amazon.com/Voices-Aging-Adult-Children-Parents/dp/0835813665/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3EMCLGZ3PKTAH&keywords=voices+of+aging&qid=1698853940&srefix=voices+of+aging%2Caps%2C104&sr=8-1)

[Parents/dp/0835813665/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3EMCLGZ3PKTAH&keywords=voices+of+aging&qid=1698853940&srefix=voices+of+aging%2Caps%2C104&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Voices-Aging-Adult-Children-Parents/dp/0835813665/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3EMCLGZ3PKTAH&keywords=voices+of+aging&qid=1698853940&srefix=voices+of+aging%2Caps%2C104&sr=8-1)

Multisensory God Connections. Linda Van Soest Tintle, 2022. Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/Multisensory-God-Connections-Actively-Growing/dp/B0BQSC638K/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1CP3K4JHLYNR6&keywords=multisensory+god+connections&qid=1698853836&srefix=multisensory+god+conections%2Caps%2C88&sr=8-1

Spiritual Keys to Aging Well. Collection of authors, Unity, 2022.

<https://shop.unity.org/offer/spiritual-keys-to-aging-well?p=WP410500>

Contributors

Dick Hamm is former General Minister & President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Regional Minister of the Christian Church in Tennessee. He is the author of numerous books on empowering the church during changing times and consults. Dick is an avid amateur astronomer and lives in Indianapolis.

Paul Koch is Regional Minister of the Christian Church in Mid-America. Prior to this calling he was a parish pastor in Missouri, Iowa, and an interfaith/civil rights minister in Alabama. He volunteers for Illuman, a Global non-profit committed to helping men become healthier, more authentic men. He lives in Musselfork, MO.

Jan Aerie is a professional gerontologist, author, and consultant to the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Global Ministries, congregations, and many other expressions of faith. Her vision and guidance led to the creation of this meditation booklet & other resources. She lives in St. Louis.

Kimberly Weir is a Board Certified Chaplain and Director at the Florida Christian Center – a community of active Older Adults. She has worked tirelessly for and with Older Adults regarding many aspects of aging. She authored a guide for sharing memories and legacy planning. She lives and works in Jacksonville.