Listen:
Hearing That Still, Small Voice and Finding Your Own

Lent 1
"Finding Your Cave:
Listening Spaces"



LISTEN

Signs at the doors to the worship space invite people to enter quietly and use the time before worship to settle into an attentive and relaxed state of being. About 15 minutes before the start of worship, all leaders should be ready and clear of preparing themselves and the space. Play meditative music or gentle sound effects (recorded) until it is time for the "prelude."

Music for Settling

[this is the prelude - meditative]

Evoking the Mystery

[a singing bowl (or use a handbell as a singing bowl) begins to tone and then other ephemeral, non-rhythmic percussion joins randomly (rain stick, wind chimes, bells)]

Leader:
I invite you to stand and turn to face the light as it comes into our midst.
[Pause as the people do this…
and then the acolyte comes slowly up the aisle from the back]

It is this "turning" or "re-orienting" ourselves toward the Holy that will characterize our season of Lent. What we pay attention to is what we are formed by. So let us begin this season of listening, of hearing that still, small voice and finding our own true selves.

[When the candle(s) on the table are being lit, the accompaniment for the theme song begins (use a penny whistle, flute or other instrument along with the piano or guitar in the musical introduction). Invite the people to sit. The choir sings alone this Sunday to introduce the tune. Sing once in unison and then add the harmony.]

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Come and rest
Come and listen
Lay the fullness of your lives before the Maker *[repeat with harmonies]*

[music continues to underscore]
Leader:
Sometimes we just need to get away in order to hear from that "still small voice" within. This quiet voice is an attribute of the Holy Living God, as Elijah found out when he retreated to a cave where he expected to experience God in big wind and earthquake and fire. What is your "cave?" What place– perhaps a park, a path, a rocking chair, a shoreline– and what practice–such as walking, journaling, reading, or making art–helps you get quiet enough for long enough so you can hear past the chaos and into the depths of your life? This Lent we will quiet things down and heighten our attention to the "still, small voice" of God and our own true self. Listening through prayer as well as meditation on sacred texts is an ancient Lenten practice. So, let us come and rest, come and listen.

Come and rest
Come and listen
There's a wisdom deep within that calls us closer
[repeat with echo and fade into silence]

Silent Rest

Note: If your community does not use silence in worship on a regular basis, start with 20 seconds and work your way up to one minute during the series.

For the worship guide: You are invited to sit quietly in the silence without any expectation of what you "ought" to be thinking. Don't worry about sounds from children or colds–simply let them float into and out of your attention. And if you find it difficult to settle your thoughts, contemplate the following:

move into practices of listening…

… the reverberations at the end of the music
… the spaces between the bird's call
… the lull after the wind whips through the trees

…the spaces "in between"

[The silence is broken by a bell, singing bowl, chime or rainstick.]

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Examen

[if you are a small community, consider having three people read the three leader lines right from their seats]

Reader(s), slowly and clearly:

For that which, then, I thought was right…
have mercy, God.
[pause]
For that which, now, I regret…
forgive me, God.
[pause]
For that which, hence, I know not what to do…
guide me, God.
[pause]

Pastor:
Come and rest, come and listen.
Know that grace, forgiveness and guidance are available to you
at each and every moment that we turn to receive them.
Thanks be to God.

[Sung once, slowly, perhaps a capella, without harmony or echo]

Come and rest
Come and listen
Lay the fullness of your lives before the Maker.

Opening Hymn/Song

Children are invited to come forward on the last verse.

"Come and Find the Quiet Center"
Chalice 575, FWS 2128, W&R 477
or
"Listening"
https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/5670664

FIND

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Children's Discovery

[Children experience the feature prayer station of the week: week one features kneeling at the rail (or pillows/chairs or baptismal font). See our Children's Discovery document]

The Psalmist's Prayer

Psalm 5: 3-7

[the accompaniment for "Listen" begins as the children leave/go back to their seats and the reader comes forward to read; the singing is woven with the reading but the music should never stop in the midst of this Psalm experience]

Sung response:
"Listen" Upper Room Worshipbook, 416
[for this first Sunday, have a song leader sing once and then all join in]

Listen to the still small voice
Listen to the still small voice
Listen to the still small voice
Listen, God is singing, God is singing
[continue musical underscore]

Reader:
Lord, in the morning you hear my voice.
In the morning I lay it all out before you.
People: Then I wait expectantly.
Because you aren't a God
who enjoys wickedness;
evil doesn't live with you.

[Repeat sung response once then continue musical underscore]

Reader: But me? I will enter your house
because of your abundant, faithful love;
I will bow down at your holy temple,
honoring you.

[Repeat sung response once to end–
pastor and reader come forward during this last sung response]

Seeking the Word

1 Kings 19: 11-12

Pastor:
The scripture in this series will be done in an abridged "lectio divina" format–which means "divine reading." We will hear the scripture read once and then we will let that

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resonate for a bit with some music for the inward journey. What words or phrases popped out for you in the reading? Feel free to doodle in your Worship Guide with that word or phrase if you wish. When the music is over, we will hear the scripture read again.

[The pastor sits and the reader begins]

Reader (or Pastor):

…[Elijah] went into a cave and spent the night… The Lord said, “Go out and stand at the mountain before the Lord. The Lord is passing by.” A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the Lord. But the Lord wasn’t in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the Lord wasn’t in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the Lord wasn’t in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet.

Music for an Inward Journey

[anthem, solo or ensemble, instrumental or recording - see our music document for suggestions]

[When the music is over, the scripture is read again by the same reader]

Homily

REFLECT

Appointment with God

Sung:

Meet me here
Find me in my wanderings
Meet me here
Deep within my soul

Leader:

During the season of Lent we will be taking significant time to visit prayer stations, much like a mini-pilgrimage within our sanctuary. To go on a pilgrimage is to open oneself to whatever the journey presents to us. It only requires a heightened state of attentiveness to our interaction with the Divine Presence. There are places to light a candle, write a prayer request for yourself or someone else, a place to let go of a worry or regret, perhaps kneel and pray, and simply spend some time at your seat and write insights

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about life and faith in the booklet provided. What have you heard deep within that you would want to share with someone else to help them in their journey? During this time we will also bring our tithes and offerings to *[the table/altar; offering station; basket by the back door - whatever works in your space].* If moving is difficult for you, let one of our ushers know and they can assist in bringing anything to you where you are. Friends, feel free to do all of the stations, only some of them or none and in any order. These stations will be here every week. This is your prayer time–your Appointment with God. We will take our time–no need to rush.

For the worship guide:
Please leave the prayer booklet in your pew/seat after the service and we will rotate them next week so that we can experience each other's wisdom–so keep that in mind when you write in the booklet.

Sung:

Meet me here
Find me in my wanderings
Meet me here
Deep within my soul

[After you sing this chant one or two more times, feel free to move to other meditative music, either live or recorded. Be sure live music is done with the attitude that this is "background" music–meaning that people should not feel like you are singing in a way that they should be watching you]

[See the "Visual & Media ideas" document for more instructions on setting up the prayer stations. If you have a congregation of over 100 people, you may want to double the stations so you have identical ones on each side of the sanctuary. Also, you can choose to only have one station per service if your space does not allow enough room for multiple prayer stations. In that case, this Sunday would be the kneeling rail (see the visual document for alternatives if you don't have a rail) where people can offer a commitment to God to make space/time in the next 40 days to a spiritual practice. If you do only one station per week, you may want to add back either the Prayers of the People or the Offering in the way that you usually do them and we recommend that you always have the prayer/insight booklets in the pews/seats available for those who are not comfortable going to the prayer stations. When you see most people are back at their seats and enough time has passed, continue.]

Closing Prayers

Pastor:
As you begin to find your seats, let us pray:

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To the call to listen, O God, we are mindful.
In the search for wholeness, O God, we are hopeful.
For the journey, O God, we are grateful.

We join this prayer with all those offered during this time with you,
and we pray together the prayer of Jesus:

[The Lord's Prayer]

PREPARE TO LISTEN IN THE WORLD

[If lights are dim, they come up at this point in the service]

Connecting

[Use this time to welcome visitors, make announcements (but try to keep it to a minimum in this series), invite people to join a Lent prayer practice/study group]

Hymn/Song for Moving On

"The Voice of God Is Calling" Chalice 666, UMH 436
(these words are really good but this is not my favorite tune–the meter is 76.76D so you could choose a more singable tune)
or
""Help Us to Hear" by Brian Sirchio
https://www.convergencemp.com/topics/insight-and-wisdom/help-us-to-hear.html

Benediction

Pastor:
[give yourself the exercise of memorizing this short piece to use for the series so you can say it as you walk toward the back door… and look into people's eyes as you go; the musical introduction to the sung benediction begins underneath]

And now as you move on into the world…

Hold that which is happening on the outside AND the inside dear.
Love what comes across your path for what it will teach you.
Cherish the struggle that stirs in your gut for how it will guide you.

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And know that all people carry within them
the Essence of the Divine–a Holy Wisdom–given at birth.

Listen every day until we meet again.
Get quiet enough to hear the still small voice and to find your own.
And may the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you all.
And all God's people say, **Amen.**

Sung Benediction

We're so thankful that you are still speaking,
You're still speaking, gracious God.
For the sake of the world you are seeking
We are listening, listening now
[repeat with tag]

Pastor [from the back]:
Please pass the peace with your neighbors as you move into the world.

Music for Going Out

[The postlude for the series should be music that sends people out–less contemplative than the prelude and not something that people sit and listen to–we've done a lot of listening in the service already! It could simply be a reprise of the final hymn/song. If you are a church that typically does not do a postlude in Lent, we suggest you bring back the singing bowl, rainstick, and chimes for some sound effect as people pass the peace and leave.]

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