Busy:
Reconnecting with an Unhurried God

"The Right Tempo"

Lent 1

Taking a Breather

As we gather together, we will use the first part of our service to slow down, to settle our souls so that we might reconnect with an "unhurried God."

Gather

Prelude - musician's choice - see more notes in the Music Document

Slow It Down (Threshold Moment)

[A clock soundtrack starts ticking and 3 people stand up and shout to each other from their seats around the sanctuary…]

Voice 1: *(to voice #2)* Yoo hoo!!!! How are you?
Voice 2: *(very dramatic)* I'm soooooo busy!
Voice 3: You can say that again!
Voice 2: I'm soooooo busy!
Voice 3: I didn't really mean that literally. Just that I KNOW what you mean! I keep meeting myself comin' and goin'!
Voice 1: Whew, indeed! When will the rat race end?

[The clock-ticking recedes as the instrumentation (BEACH SPRING) comes in and continues under the next words…]

Pastor: We live in a clock-ticking, fast-faced world. Being "busy" has become a measure of worth in our society. We get big points for productivity, collecting accomplishments, having and being "more." But our very souls are paying a high price. What does it cost our communities, our relationships, and our personal well-being to be so busy? Lent traditions of "giving something up" developed over the centuries. But instead of thinking of "giving up" as punishment in some way, we are going to see it as making more room for God and moving in the direction of "self-care" so that we might have more spiritual and energetic reserves. in order to make more room, we are going to focus on de-cluttering and lightening up our lives. This week, we focus on finding the rhythms of life that feed us… finding just the "right tempo."

[Sung]

Come and find the quiet center in the crowded lives we lead
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see
[ritard] **All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be…**
[fade into silence]

Catching our Breath

I invite you to a deep breath…
[take a moment to breathe in and out slowly]
If you have a watch on, I invite you to take it off for this hour of worship.
If you have a phone, I invite you to turn it off or put it away now.
If that makes you very anxious, that's OK–maybe next week you'll be able to do it.
Just notice the feeling and give it some thought.
Let these simple acts (or maybe not-so-simple acts)
be a sign of the commitment to give ourselves a break,
to give ourselves just an hour to catch our breath,
to give our *selves* time to give God attention.
[And don't worry, I will make sure I'm watching my time…
this is not just permission for me to preach longer!]

Prayer for Clearing Out

Let us pray a "prayer for clearing out…"
Spacious God, we come today hoping for tools to sweep away the stress.
Let us *make* room for You.
Nudge us in this time of worship to seek the things that really matter.
Let us *find* room for You.
Help us to claim our own selves as a holy sanctuary where you dwell.
Let us *be* room for You.
In the name of Jesus, who invites us to wholeness.
Amen.

Opening Song

"Lord of all Hopefulness" FWS 2197, GTG 683, W&R 469
or "Good, Good, Father" Songselect #7036612
[or other more familiar song that speaks of gentleness, peace, calm and God's presence]

Peace

Before you settle back into your seats, take time to connect with the people around you, starting the conversation this way,
"When was the last time you had a chance to catch your breath?"

[allow a bit more time than usual for this to happen]

Taking Note

The second part of our service invites us to "take note" of what God is saying to us this day, through the children, through the music and through the sermon.

Hanging Out

[the children are invited forward toward the end of the peace and music begins under the invitation. The people sing as the children come forward and as the adults settle into their seats]

Take time to be holy, speak oft with the Lord;
Abide in him always, and feed on his Word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing, his blessing to seek. *[UMH 395, Chalice 572, W&R 483]*

See the Children's document for ideas for each week.

Reconnecting (Scripture)

Matthew 11:28-30

[the introduction to the anthem/band song begins under this reading…]

Reader: Come to me all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

From the Playlist (Anthem/Band Song)

See Music Document for commentary about choosing music for this series

Focusing on the Main Thing (Sermon)

See Small Group and Sermon Fodder document for materials to steep in as you prepare your sermon. Here is the "gist" of the message for the day:

Jesus never promised that the yoke would literally be "easy." This is a mistranslation. In this context of yoking oxen, the translation means "well fitting." As we begin our "Busy" series, we discover that each of us has a tempo that fits well, that energizes us. What tempo gives you life and energy? What tempo of life feels toxic to you? What is the cost?

Taking Care

The third part of our service is our response to having listened for God's word. We "take care" to focus through prayer, offering [and communion] on what's really important, really essential, to lives lived with depth.

"Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Pastor: If you raised children, or are raising children, or even if you haven't or aren't, you've heard of a "time out." We give a time out when a break is needed. Perhaps we need to think about the consequences of an action or we just need to break the intensity. Perhaps we are spiraling emotionally and need some perspective. Perhaps we just need to get quiet so we can change the course of action. In this series, we are giving ourselves a "time out" and we are sending ourselves to the Prayer Chair.

[go sit in the chair in the chancel… underscoring begins for the next part]

This will be a time for letting go of the things we do not need that are weighing us down, sometimes known as "confession, assurance, and petition." These three ways of reconnecting with God are ancient and just make so much sense.
In confession, we let go of regret about the past–unburdening our hearts.
Then we remember the promise and assurance that God will never abandon us, no matter what, even when sometimes we are the ones who have been distant.
And in petitions, we let go of worry about the things we cannot control and worry about the future–giving it all to the loving God who holds us close and rocks us gently.
My hope is that you will also designate a prayer chair at home and find time each day to give yourself a "time out in your Prayer Chair" to let go, remember God's presence, and ask God to hold all those you hold dear.

So let's just start with some silence… and it's OK not to try to find words to fill that silence in your head. And it's ok if thoughts won't quiet down. Just find a stillness, perhaps calling your attention to your feet on the floor or your hands in your lap and your breath in and out. There is nothing expected of you now. There is no where to go, no where to be. This stillness, this being, is enough.

[music fades to silence… take the amount of silence your congregation is used to–you may want to see if you can stretch it a bit longer each week of the series. A voice (or voices) break the silence with vs. 2 of "Come and Find the Quiet Center," sung slowly, perhaps a cappella]

Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

For the times when we have run ourselves and others ragged… forgive us.
For the times when we have asked of ourselves too much or too little… forgive us.
Help us find the right tempos for the right times, O God.
Help us be gentle in our learning and growing–with ourselves and with others.
Help us step back when the toxic and overbearing pace of life that we believe we must adhere to in order to live up to some external ideal threatens to tear down our connections to life, love and to you.

In this moment we hear your promise:
"My yoke is easy,
my burden is light."

You do not ask us to destroy ourselves in order to please you.
We are your children, created by you, with whom you are pleased… Just. Because.

We bring our petitions to you this day, O God. Here are the people and things we are worried about and yet know that we cannot control:
[continue on with your pastoral prayer…
finishing with the Lord's Prayer if that is your custom. See the music document for suggestions about finishing with a sung Lord's Prayer.]

Noticing What's Important (Offering)

[In order to lighten the musician's load for this series, you might decide to ask individuals to give testimony about their "fasting" from busy-ness as you pass the offering plate.]

Doxology

[sung to OLD 100th]

For time to savor God's good gifts
For space to breathe and hearts to lift
For ways to reach out and to give
We offer thanks and vow to live!

Family Time (communion)

[If you are doing communion in this service, place it here–or any other, more familiar place in the order of worship. See the separate Communion Liturgy document]

Taking It Out

The final movement of our service is a time of committing to take a bit of this serenity and peace out into the busy world. We are reminded to "keep the main thing the main thing."

Closing Song

"I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"
FWS 2153, SPP 139, GTG 700, Voices United 575
or
"Take My Life" Songselect 4162843
[or other hymn/song more familiar to your congregation about living a connected life with God]

Invitation to Lenten Practices

So when you get home, find a chair that will be your Prayer Chair for Lent. We have today's prayer ready for you to use…*[announce that it is an insert or that they can pick one up on the way out or… however you will distribute].* And if you were not at Ash Wednesday retreat/service, then check out the insert about the Lenten daily

practice of the Prayer Chair and God Box that you can do at home. This God Box will be available here in the sanctuary throughout the season whenever you need to add to it.

Blessing for the Unhurried Life

May the tempo of your journey
be “just right.”
May you seize the day,
but also savor the moment.
May your life be the one you live
and not just watch passing by.

And may you be reacquainted each day
with an unhurried God
who is calling you to dive deeply into love.

[short four measure intro, then sung by all, more uptempo, sweeping]
In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other’s pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
There’s a place for deepest dreaming, there’s a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit’s lively scheming there is always room to spare.

Postlude