

## Centering Prayer: A Spiritual Tool in Challenging Times

August 2009

During difficult times spiritual grounding is all the more important. A simple practice is centering prayer. Try it once a day for 20 minutes. Agree with some friends to pray together or separately at the same time every day. Know you are not alone as you move into silence.

### *The Practice*

- Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within, for example, love, shalom, abba, om, peace. This is a personal choice and may be changed from one prayer time to the next, but should be kept during any given prayer session.
- Sitting comfortably, with your eyes closed and back straight, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word.
- As thoughts arise, briefly and gently acknowledge them then let them drift away as you return to the word.
- Many thoughts will come to mind during centering prayer. This is natural no matter how long you have been doing the practice. The intention is not to get rid of the thoughts but to be open to God's presence within you without being distracted by them. Don't try to force this to happen. The gentle action of returning to the word and not focusing on your thoughts will help you to become more attentive, to listen more deeply, as you become more grounded in God.
- At the end of the prayer time, offer a prayer of gratitude and move quietly back into your daily living.

### *Tools*

A useful tool is the CD **Rooted in the Divine: Silent Intervals for Meditation**. Each track begins and ends with music. Double CD includes intervals of silence from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. A print insert explains centering prayer. Available through the United Church Resource Distribution Centre. Call toll-free 1-800-288-7365.

*(Written by Anne Martin, Spiritual Formation & Small Group Ministries, United Church)*