

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

**March 6, 2019, Ash Wednesday**

Psalm 51: 1-4, 6-12, 15-17, Matthew 5:13-16 The Message (non-RCL)

“LECTIO DIVINA”

Tonight, we enter the season of Lent.

A season of turning back to God,

a season of paying attention to how we are living the life of faith.

A season of preparing our hearts and lives to remember Jesus' death on the cross for us, and his resurrection to new life for us.

Lent asks us to pay attention and to take action in how we are living as followers of Jesus.

This year during the Sundays of Lent, we will be paying attention to our spiritual lives through the book *Space for God*. Tonight, I want to share with you a way that our Christian brothers and sisters have made space of God for over 1500 years.

It is the spiritual practice called “Lectio Divina,” a phrase in Latin that means “Divine Reading.” Lectio Divina invites us to spend time with a passage from the Bible and to slowly listen for the way that God is speaking to us through the passage.

It is a “prayerful and personal” way of meeting God in the words of the Bible.

You can do this divine reading alone or in a group, or in worship as we are doing tonight. It can be done with any passage from the Bible.

I've written the basics of the practice into your bulletins so you can take it home with you tonight. What I'm going to invite you to do tonight is actually experience Lectio Divina as we spend time with Matthew 5:13-16. I'll be reading from the Message Translation of the Bible.

We are used to reading a Bible passage once on Sunday morning, and usually once if we are reading on our own. With Lectio Divina we will hear the same passage three times. This may seem unusual to you, or too repetitive.

In Lectio Divina we are being asked to hear the Bible as a long-awaited love letter from God to us. It is addressed to each one of us. We are invited to listen expectantly, believing that God is longing to meet us and speak to us as we read scripture. Reading it three times allows us to take in the words, to really spend time with them and with God, and let them and God enter our lives.

I'll begin by asking you to sit for a moment in silent prayer asking God to be with you. This allows us to focus and prepare for God to speak to us. Let us enter into silence now, asking God to give us ears to hear. Amen.

1. We begin now with **Lectio or the Reading**. As you listen to the reading, listen for a word or phrase that catches your attention. Listen for a word or phrase that “touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you.”

**Listen for the Word of God: Matthew 5: 13-16 (The Message Translation)**

Take a moment to hold onto your word or phrase.

2. We now come to **Meditatio or Reflecting**. I will read the passage again and I ask you to ponder and reflect on the word or phrase that caught your attention: what is it saying to you, offering

you, asking of you? Following the reading we will enter into a moment of silence to reflect on the word or phrase that has caught our attention.

**Listen for the Word of God: Matthew 5: 13-16 (The Message Translation)**

Let us now enter into a moment of silence to reflect on the word or phrase that is speaking to you.

What is God saying to you in this word or phrase, what is God asking of you?

How does this word or phrase relate to what you have heard and seen today?

Does it speak to what is happening at home, at work, at school, in your family, your neighborhood, or your life?

Let us enter into a time of reflecting in silence.

3. We now come to **Oratio or Reacting**. I will read the passage a third time. At the end of the reading we will enter into a time of prayer. When you feel ready, you will be invited to respond to God in prayer about this word or phrase in your life.

**Listen for the Word of God: Matthew 5: 13-16 (The Message Translation)**

When you feel ready, respond to God in prayer about this word or phrase in your life.

4. Finally we enter into a time of **Contemplatio or Resting**. We will once again enter into silence. During the silence, allow yourself to simply rest silently with God for a time. This isn't about talking to God but sitting in silence with God.

Allow yourself to be open to God's love and peace that is for you. Let go "of your own words, and enjoy the experience of being in the presence of God."

Some describe this as the silent communion between a child held safely in their parent's arms.

Let us enter into silence and rest in the presence of our loving God.

Amen.

From Bulletin: Lectio Divina is Latin for "Divine Reading." It is an ancient spiritual practice of listening "with the ears of our hearts" to the reading of the Scriptures. It has four basic movements:

Begin by settling into a time of silence

Lectio (Reading) Slowly read the passage as though it were a long-awaited letter written just to you.

Listen for a word or phrase that "touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you."

Meditatio (Reflecting) Read the passage again, ponder the word or phrase that caught your attention, what is it saying to you, offering you, asking of you?

Oratio (Reacting) Read the passage a third time. When you feel ready, respond to God in prayer about this word or phrase in your life.

Contemplatio (Resting) "Allow yourself to simply rest silently with God for a time...open to the quiet fullness of God's love and peace." Be like an infant resting in its parent's arms

(You may choose to use a different Bible translation for each reading)

The information about Lectio Divina comes from:

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