

Concluding Prayer:

As you leave, please exit through the narthex. The Rose Window at the south end of the sanctuary is a representation of The Great Commission. Each petal contains a symbol of an early apostle who helped spread the Good News. May the words spoken by Christ to those apostles be yours today: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20). Hear your Benediction:

Go in peace,

taking from this place

love, forgiveness, and fortitude.

Go in stillness,

with confidence of God's abiding presence.

Go in joy,

with the assurance that the bonds of our love in Christ
cannot be broken.

You are a part of our family.

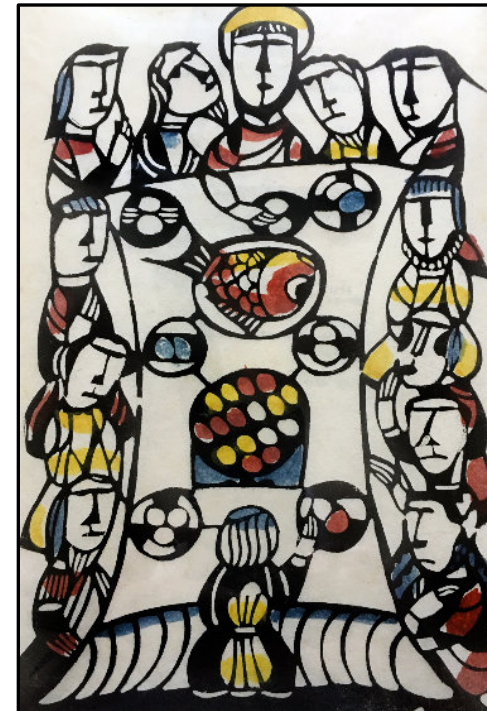
Here you will always be at home.

Go in peace. Amen.

Thank you for coming – Christ's peace go with you!

Going Out and Coming In: A Liturgy for Stillness

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*"The Lord is your keeper."
(Ps. 121: 5)*

Cover Image by Sadao Watanabe (1913-1996). We house a collection of Watanabe's work in our Common Room.

Second Presbyterian Church

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Opening Poem by Rev. Brian Shivers

Read the following to yourself. Welcome yourself into this space.

there is a silence
at the heart of all things
it speaks your name

there is a silence
echoing in the depth of the deep
before the universe became

there is a silence
in the midst of the noise
calling each one to life

there is a silence
singing the essence of being
on the winds of divinity

there is a silence
at the heart of all things
beckoning all to listen

After you've read this poem, slow down, read it again. This time take a short breath between each phrase. Feel the slowing of your heartrate; know that you have entered into holy ground. Allow yourself to be still and let God's Spirit draw even more near to you. Then, pray these words:

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Use me; renew me. Fill me with a peace that permeates deeper than my anxieties. Focus my attention even when I feel scattered. In my worry, when I doubt the promises that you have made, forgive and reassure me. Even when I cannot see the road ahead, O Sovereign Lord, be my guide.

As you look at the north side of the sanctuary, your eyes are drawn toward The Ascension Window behind the chancel. It depicts the mystery of Christ being raised back into heaven forty days after his resurrection (Lk. 24: 50-53). About level with

the large cross, you'll notice the disciples gathered closely together. Some look scared, while others turn their faces away. Just like the disciples, now you are also watching this strange and mysterious scene play out. The calm and composed Christ is Lord, and the window depicts even the angels as worshipping him. Yet, the disciples remain fearful and confused.

But fear is not faith's absence. The window ceaselessly draws our attention to Christ in glory, situated at the window's center, while the anxiety of the disciples quickly fades into the periphery. This is the crux of our faith: learning to remain focused on Christ, even as worry threatens to distort our vision. Faith is not the absence of fear, but a refusal to give it more than its due.

Take deep breaths and be honest with God. Where does God need to supplant your worry with stillness and trust? Pray through the Psalmist's words (Ps. 27). If you are here with a family member, consider praying through these responsively.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

**The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?**

Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
**though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.**

One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
**to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.**

For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
**he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.**

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!**