
Letters to a Young Episcopalian: Centering Prayer

This letter is part of a series of fictional letters by Canon George Maxwell intended for Episcopalians young and old who wonder what it means to be faithful in the world today.

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Dear Anna,

It was good to hear your voice and see your face last night, even if only over the phone. I look forward to being with you in person after all of this is over.

I'm really sorry that you had to leave school. I know that you were looking forward to the spring cycling season, and I can only begin to imagine how hard it is to be separated from your friend, Bryce, who I understand was admitted to the hospital this morning with the new coronavirus.

After I heard this news, I started thinking again about your worry that you are losing your sense of the presence of God in the fear and anxiety generated by this pandemic.

Your concern reminds me of how I felt last year when I realized how sick I was and how long it was going to take me to recover. The medication they gave prevented me from sleeping at night and heightened my already troubling anxiety. I knew that I was going to have to be more disciplined in my spiritual practices if I was going to get through it all.

Centering prayer is the practice that has helped me the most.

It's simple, really. There's even an app to help you through it! The point is to become more available to God by being silent and using a sacred word to help you let go of the thoughts, emotions, or sensations that inevitably arise.

It's the letting go that's important. It teaches us to draw our energy from the presence of God inside of us instead of whatever is happening in the world around us. It's how we learn to respond to things instead of reacting to them.

If you would like to learn more about this method of meditation, just let me know.

Centering prayer is the thing that keeps reminding me that my happiness doesn't depend on anything outside of myself.

Welcome home, Anna.

Your affectionate uncle,
Ames