

February 7 The Inner Life

For years, I couldn't find time in my busy pastor schedule for the daily meditation I longed for and believed would help me become a better pastor. I sought out a spiritual director for advice. She suggested, "Just sit in your backyard and spend a few minutes sipping your morning tea, noticing what you see and hear."

How could I argue with that? I tried it. I was amazed by the beauty of my urban backyard. I noticed spring blossoms and bird song. I felt the wind in my hair and the sun on my cheeks. I was refreshed and had more to give others from a place of ease and harmony.

Of course, many times I forgot or felt too rushed, so sometimes I savored those minutes at the end of the day. Often five minutes became ten or twenty as I enjoyed the gift of quiet contemplation. Eventually, it became a meditation practice.

Perhaps the only time many of us have is to take a few deep breaths at a red light or while using the rest room. Don't discount how useful this can be. Scientific studies show that just two minutes of slow, deep breathing reduces anxiety and helps people become significantly calmer. Deep breaths can also be a way to steady our minds and hearts, helping make the transition to the next activity.

I recently read, "If you don't go within, you go without." Going within doesn't have to be a complicated, therapeutic deep dive but a return to the touchstone of the divine within. It's a reminder that we have a wellspring of peace, calm and energy as close as our heart.

*Paula*