

the power of slowing down. In our waiting upon God, sitting with feelings, thoughts, and sensations, we not only learn about purity of heart, patience, and humility, but about our human limits. The capacity to rest in what is already here, to let it be enough, nurtures contentment and peace of mind. We come closer to that which we are truly called to be in the world, bringing us closer to God. As in life, our task in meeting for worship, which is not for the faint-hearted, is to be drawn closer to God.

→ There is no single, right way to “center down.” For me, a state of centeredness is a deep settling of my body and mind. It is as though a plumb line has been dropped down the center of my body. I often feel both physically and energetically as if I am becoming heavier, settling into my seat. Sometimes the centering comes without effort, and other times, when my body and mind are stubbornly unstill and distracted, it is real work. I may begin with a silent prayer or reflection, become aware of my surroundings, or briefly glance at fellow worshipers as they arrive and settle. Sometimes I recall a tender moment in the week gone by, or a single word or phrase settles within me. I try to avoid mentally reviewing the week just past, assessing how I might have fallen short or been responsive to God’s presence and guidance. This kind of mental activity puts me in a comparing, judging mindset that is inherently critical and goal-oriented. Instead, I simply allow my body to settle down.

I begin by noticing how I feel physically: I notice how I am breathing, how I am sitting, the parts of my body. Often, I simply allow my mind to wander, letting thoughts be a part of coming into stillness. Centering is not about having an empty mind, void of thoughts. Instead it is cultivating an open and receptive mind focused on God. Rather than eliminating thoughts that are not Spirit-based, the open mind expresses radical willingness to accept and unfold to the movement and mystery of God.

When my mind wanders to the “task list” in my head, or I find myself completely removed from any thought of God, or I simply feel lifeless, then I try to recognize this and remember why I came to meeting for worship in the first place. I notice that my mind has been pulled away from awareness of God’s presence. The effort of recalling myself back to God, the willingness to be vulnerable to whatever arises and yet patiently return the mind and heart to the Living Presence, is in itself healing.