

WEEK 1 “Be Still” FOR QUIET CONFIDENCE, Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*




If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This prayer was composed by the Rev. John Suter, Jr. [1890-1997]. It was first printed in a book of collects in 1919 and later added to the 1928 Prayer Book. Thus, this collect is an example of the ongoing development of the prayer book. It incorporates phrases from Isaiah 30:15 and Psalm 46:11. Given the timing of its first publication in 1919, it may have been written during World War I. Suter was an advocate for the increased role of women in the church and the revision of the prayer book. His ordained ministry began in Massachusetts, and he later served as the dean of the [National] Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul in Washington, DC, from 1944 until 1950. Suter also served as the custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer, from 1942 to 1963. The custodian is a canonically directed appointment made by the General Convention and is responsible for certifying that what is published in the Book of Common Prayer is the text approved by the General Convention. The custodian is also responsible for certifying that translations into languages other than English are faithful to the original.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Psalm 46. Pay particular attention to the context described in the beginning of the psalm and the anticipated response at the end of the psalm. The Hebrew word in verse 46:10 often translated “be still” literally means to sink, or drop, as in “drop your hands, or let go.” It can also mean “stop it” or as one person suggests “shut up.” How might this much more active definition affect our understanding of being still?

I Kings 19:4-18. Pay attention to the context in Elijah's life. Why is he afraid and anxious? What do you think is meant in the phrase "the sheer silence"? Other translations use "a whisper" in place of sheer silence. How does that affect your understanding?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. The Hebrew word for "be still" can be translated "let be" or "sink in." What is it about stillness that is important for a life with God? What are the obstacles in your life and/or personality to 'sinking in' and being quiet?
2. Speak of a time when you heard God in your heart.
3. What is the hope for one who prays this particular collect?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*