

God's Silent Embrace: Clergy Self-Care

By Warren Lynn

Too-often, ministry seems less about responding to whispers from God, and more about shouting through all the noise of our world just so we can be heard. But even as we compete with the deafening hum of the world's demand for attention, the risk is that we simply add to the noise.

I know folks who always have the radio on in their car out of concern they might miss some important news. Others never shut off their cell-phone, even interrupting important conversations to take incoming calls. And still others have their computers on all the time for fear they might miss an e-mail note the moment it arrives. I must confess, I recently found myself at my desk answering an e-mail note while talking to another minister on the phone while carrying-on an instant-messaging conversation with another minister as my iPod played Gregorian Chants in the background.

Somewhere in the midst of the busy noise smothering our lives, we wonder about the seeming absence of God's sustaining presence, even just a quiet strength to nurture our souls in the way cool water energizes a desert traveler.

If just a tiny little bit of such rings true in your life, I would invite you to listen to the simple words of an ordinary mystic, John Cook, former choir director, Allisonville Christian Church, Indianapolis. He once wrote, "I resolve to embrace silence ... I am pledging to slow down and take a breath every now and again. But newfound commitment to silence isn't simply a new thing for this day and age. Psalm 46 has invited people through the ages to 'Be still and know that I am God!' Admittedly, it's difficult with hectic schedules to be still while rushing from point A to point B, but try the following. Instead of blaring the radio, try driving all the way to work listening to the drive. Turn off the cell phone, and just listen. I bet that you will notice things on your drive that have eluded you.

"A reporter once interviewed Mother Teresa. He asked, 'Amid all this poverty and despair, what words do you use when you pray to God?' She smiled and replied, 'I do not speak; I only listen.' The reporter thought for a moment and then asked, 'What words does God use?' She smiled and said, 'He does not speak; He only listens.' So often we hear it called the 'still-small voice of God.' Lets all take a collective breath and listen for it." Amen.

Warren Lynn is the Director of Search and Call in Disciples Home Missions. He is a member of Allisonville Christian Church in Indianapolis, Ind. Warren can be reached by telephone at (888) 346-2631, extension 2652, or by e-mail at wlynn@dhm.disciples.org.