



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The power of silence

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message

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If you're like me, our lives are surrounded by sound. There's very little silence — from car motors to lawn machines, the ever-present beeps on our handheld electronic devices telling us about another text or another message. It's just noise all the time. Sometimes it just is ambient noise. But silence is really an important part of one's health and also one's spiritual health.

I hope you remember the story of Elijah. When Elijah was fleeing from Jezebel for his life — OK, he had, you know, killed all of her imported priests — but he was fleeing for his life. And he goes and hides in a cave, and he's holed up there. And he hears the Lord saying, "Elijah, I want you to come out and listen to me; I've got something to say." And Elijah just stayed there, and first there was this mighty whirlwind, like to split rocks. And then the next thing was, it was an earthquake, and it was followed by a roaring fire. And Elijah knew that God was not in any of those. And then came the sound of sheer silence. This is sometimes translated "a still, small voice," but it was absolute silence. And in that silence, Elijah knew that the Lord was present. So he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out to stand before the Lord.

Silence is an important spiritual discipline. It helps us to be still for a while, but also it removes everything — all our excuses and plans and all the thinking that goes on — so that the soul stands with nothing between it and its source of being. My spiritual director encourages me to spend 20 minutes a day in silence. I can do about 5, but I realize and understand that when I enter into that silence I am also intentionally entering into the presence of God, and that's something that can bring all of us peace.

Be well, dear church.