

## **Never Really Alone**

Gena is a therapist and seminary professor who studies the relationship between neuroscience and spirituality. Years ago Gena noted that she often struggled with strong emotions. “I struggled with distressing emotions like anxiety or shame,” reflected Gena, “that would hijack my best intentions in conversations or interfere in my desires for healthy living.”

Many people can relate to this experience of strong emotions that take over. And many people can understand trying to stay busy all the time because sitting still seems to “invite” these strong emotions. “These emotions surfaced,” says Gena, “when I sat in silence and tried to place attention on my breath.” Such an experience can keep many people compulsively busy so as to not have to “deal with” these feelings. Of course, feelings have a way of expressing themselves one way or another, either directly or indirectly.



Untold suffering, negative public health outcomes, undiagnosed trauma, and many more problems can plague people’s lives—and our health as a society—when feelings aren’t given their proper place in our awareness, and when we aren’t equipped with practical tools to respond as part of a community.

Through a practice of contemplative prayer, Gena found sufficient trust to sit through the rise and fall of emotions. “Over time,” Gena notes, “I saw that my emotions rise and fall like waves, and I learned to trust they’ll peak and then dissipate. I can remain quiet and still,” continues Gena, “and observe my feelings. Knowing my emotions will not last forever gives me hope...”

Gena attended contemplative worship at St. Martin’s recently after receiving a personal invitation. She found a community that helped her practice remaining quiet and still. “I find that practicing with others, like our experience at St. Martin’s, helps me remember,” Gena reflected, “that even when I’m alone, I’m never really alone. I’m connected to other lovely humans who are also practicing connecting with their bodies and spirits in this meaningful way. That helps me remain committed to the practice between gatherings.”

---

You, too, can join this faith community as we practice being still together in the loving presence of God! St. Martin’s gathers for contemplative worship **every Saturday at 5 PM** in the chapel (606 W 15th St., Austin, TX 78701; enter along 15th St.) and via [St. Martin’s YouTube channel](#). Remember, like Gena, that you are *never really alone*.