

HOPE UMC SUMMER OF PRAYER 2017

Supplies You May Want to Use

- ❖ Bible
- ❖ Prayer candle and lighter
- ❖ Pen, pencils, art supplies
- ❖ Journal or computer on which to write
- ❖ Reading glasses
- ❖ Church and friend/family directory
- ❖ Comfortable pillow or chair

You are invited to take part in this 6-week prayer event as individuals, as a family, as part of a faith group. Where and when you pray is up to you. You are encouraged, as part of the Hope faith community, to include the Hope prayer in your daily activities. This prayer is from the Hope for the Future Campaign, with some slight alterations:

HOPE PRAYER

Gracious God, we are blessed and we are grateful... and still we need. We come to you seeking guidance and wisdom as we go forward with our faith community, Hope. Give us the insight to understand your desires for us. Give us the faith to trust your will. Give us the realization that it is our responsibility to do our part to make this work and worship pleasing to you. Give us hope for the future. With confidence in your love and gratitude in our hearts, we pray in Jesus name. Amen!

PRAYER EACH DAY

Each day on this journey you will find a scripture and a prayer. Here is an example of arranging this prayer time:

- Begin your time by going to a place you have designated for prayer and get comfortable in a chair or on a pillow.
- Light a candle to welcome Jesus into your prayer time.
- Take some deep breaths and become fully present in this time with God.
- Read the scripture for the day through slowly – what words or lines speak to you? Read the scripture again and then underline or write down in your journal those words that speak to you. Read another Bible interpretation if you would like to understand more.
- Read the insights for the day, then prepare yourself for prayer.
- Begin your prayer time with the daily prayer given. Then, if you feel you want to continue with your prayer, you can pray for your family, friends, yourself, your faith community – prayers of thanksgiving, of concerns. **BE SURE TO LEAVE A TIME OF SILENCE SO YOU CAN HEAR GOD TALKING AS WELL!**
- When you are finished, take a deep breath and give thanks for this day in your life.

Week 1: Monday, June 12th – How Do You Know About God?

Scripture: Psalm 139:1-12

LORD, you have examined me. You know me.

² *You know when I sit down and when I stand up.*

Even from far away, you comprehend my plans.

³ *You study my traveling and resting. You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways.*

⁴ *There isn't a word on my tongue, LORD, that you don't already know completely.*

⁵ *You surround me—front and back. You put your hand on me.*

⁶ *That kind of knowledge is too much for me; it's so high above me that I can't fathom it.*

⁷ *Where could I go to get away from your spirit? Where could I go to escape your presence?*

⁸ *If I went up to heaven, you would be there. If I went down to the grave,^[a] you would be there too!*

⁹ *If I could fly on the wings of dawn, stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—*

¹⁰ *even there your hand would guide me; even there your strong hand would hold me tight!*

¹¹ *If I said, "The darkness will definitely hide me; the light will become night around me,"*

¹² *even then the darkness isn't too dark for you! Nighttime would shine bright as day, because darkness is the same as light to you!*

Our God is a vast, mysterious and so different from anything we know. God is HUGE! How do you know about God? Close your eyes and ask God to show you the times in your life when you have seen or experienced God most clearly. Were these moments of faith or in your daily life? Reading the Bible or doing dishes? A nudge from the Holy Spirit or driving a favorite stretch of road? We all experience God differently. Write down what you feel is most important to your faith life.

Prayer

God, you are the creator of the universe and so much more than we can possibly understand. Jesus told us to call you our parent because you love us so unconditionally. Thank you for my life and for my family and friends in this life. Give me strength to get to know you better as I go through this prayer time. I offer you this time and all that I am. Amen.

Week 1: Tuesday, June 13th – What Would Your Altar Look Like?

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9

The LORD said to Abram, “Leave your land, your family, and your father’s household for the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, those who curse you I will curse; all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you.”^[a]

⁴ Abram left just as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all of their possessions, and those who became members of their household in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites lived in the land at that time. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I give this land to your descendants,” so Abram built an altar there to the LORD who appeared to him. ⁸ From there he traveled toward the mountains east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and worshipped in the LORD’s name. ⁹ Then Abram set out toward the arid southern plain, making and breaking camp as he went.

Ready? We too are on our faith journey! Like Sarah and Abraham, who are just starting out we too are starting a new stage of our journey. This couple packed up and left the life they had known to follow God’s call. In verses 7-8 Abraham builds an altar to offer God everything they have and everything they are.

Now it’s your turn. Read verses 7-8 again and then imagine the altar you would build God. Sit back and really imagine it – what kind of rocks, how heavy they are, what the finished altar would look like, and most importantly, what you would offer God there. Be silent for a bit and see if God wants you to put anything else on the altar – a relationship to mend, a bad habit, a dream left unfulfilled. Then be quiet again and give God all you have placed on the altar.

Prayer

God of all, here are the things I think you would like me to offer you as I continue my faith journey. Please accept these gifts and show me if there is anything else I can do to see you more clearly. Help me to begin to understand how much you love me and help me love myself so I can love you and others so completely. Amen.

Week 1: Wednesday, June 14th Thank You, God!

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! ⁵ Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. ⁶ Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. ⁷ Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

We live way too fast – racing to meetings, multi-tasking, blasting our car horns, running through the kitchen to grab something to eat. Few of us write thank you notes anymore and even sometimes forget to even say the words to one another or God! We need to slow down so we can see the blessings in our lives or see God at work in our lives.

Take time now, and through your day, to take the time to notice God at work – God's blessings all around you. Keep a tally of all of those blessings or write them down. Then, tonight before you go to bed, thank God for all of the day's blessings and God's presence. If you're a writer, write God a thank you note!

Prayer: (from the Sarum Missal, Salisbury, England)

*God be in my head and my understanding,
God be in my eyes and in my looking,
God be in my mouth and in my speaking;
God be in my heart and in my thinking;
God be at my end and in my parting.*

Thanks be to God!!

Week 1: Thursday, June 15th – Taking Up the Cross

Scripture: Luke 9:18-27

¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying by himself, the disciples joined him, and he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” ¹⁹ They answered, “John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others that one of the ancient prophets has come back to life.” ²⁰ He asked them, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ sent from God.”

²¹ Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell this to anyone. ²² He said, “The Human One^[a] must suffer many things and be rejected—by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts—and be killed and be raised on the third day.”

²³ Jesus said to everyone, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will save them. ²⁵ What advantage do people have if they gain the whole world for themselves yet perish or lose their lives? ²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Human One^[b] will be ashamed of that person when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ I assure you that some standing here won’t die before they see God’s kingdom.”

Just as the disciples in this scripture, many of us are not clear who Jesus is. Jesus has been many things to people over the last 2000 years and it’s sometimes hard to pin down just exactly who he is and why we follow him.

Who do you think Jesus is? A prophet? A vague historical figure who made a great impact? An example of the way to live? Your savior? What does Jesus mean to your life?

Or, you can think of it this way – do you think of yourself as a Christian? What difference does that make in your daily life and in the way you view the world?

As you contemplate these questions, take a moment of silence. Close your eyes and ask Jesus to help you better understand what it means to be a disciple, his follower. Listen to hear ways you can learn more.

Prayer

Holy One, I come to you with only a surface understanding of what it means to follow you and call myself a Christian. I ask you now to show me what I can do to be a better disciple. Please give me the courage to walk with you and live the Christian life.

Week 1: Friday, June 16th – All the Children of the World

Scripture: Mark 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, "Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. ¹⁵ I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it." ¹⁶ Then he hugged the children and blessed them.

Jesus loved children. All through the Gospels we have stories of healing children, bringing a child back to life, being with children. They are important in our lives, not only representing the future but because they are reminders of how precious we all are to God.

Today let's pray for the children in our lives and in our world. When we pray for others, it is called *intercessory prayer* and it is a gift to us as much as to those for whom we pray. Being your prayer by thinking about a child and how you would hold them to comfort them. Then, close your eyes and pray for all of the children – those who are part of your family and friends, those who are in the Hope faith community, and then for all of the children you don't know. Pray for safety, food, shelter and the opportunity to come to know Jesus and have faith.

Remember that ALL children are precious to God, no matter their parentage, the religion into which they were born or where they live. Ask God to bless all of the world's children and ask how you can be God's loving hands to them.

Prayer

God, as we pray for all of the children – those we know personally and those we know only as God's precious ones, please let them all know your love and give them health and safety. May all feel Your love and may we hear your call to help bring love, health, safety and You to them. Amen.

Week 1: Saturday, June 17th – Prayers for Creation

We know that God has created a beautiful world. From the sunrise to the trees and flowers to the snakes and dogs and cats, God's creation is intricate and a great reminder of what God wants for us. Today you are invited to go out into God's creation and take time to really look at the flowers and grass and clouds – whatever is inspirational to you. Then, choose to pray one (or all) of the prayers of creation below. They are from various faith traditions but all celebrate the beauty of this world.

#1 The beauty of the trees, the softness of the air, the fragrance of the grass,
Speaks to me. The summit of the mountain, the thunder of the sky, the rhythm of
the sea, Speaks to me. The faintness of the stars, the freshness of the morning,
the dewdrop on the flower, speaks to me. The strength of fire, the taste of
salmon, the trail of the sun, and the life that never goes away, they speak to me.
And my heart soars.

Chief Dan George

#2 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land,
A land of flowing streams, with springs and underground waters,
Welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and
Fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey,
A land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing,
A land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.
You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God
For the good land he has given you.

Deuteronomy 8:7-11 NRSV

#3 Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place and the city,
And the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge and the cave,
And the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island,
And the meadow where mention of God hath been made,
And His praise glorified.

Baha U Lla'h (Baha'i)

#4 How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands!
The heavens declare Your glory, the arch of the sky displays
Your handiwork. In Your love You have given us the power to behold
The beauty of Your world robed in all its splendor. The sun and the stars,
The roaring breakers of the sea tell of Your awesome might...In Your goodness
You have made us able to hear the music of the world. The voices of loved ones
reveal to us that You are in our midst. A divine voice sings through all creation.

Jewish Prayer

Week 1: Sunday, June 18th – Praying Together in Church

Scripture: Isaiah 60:1-5

Arise! Shine! Your light has come; the LORD's glory has shone upon you.

² Though darkness covers the earth and gloom the nations, the LORD will shine upon you; God's glory will appear over you. ³ Nations will come to your light and kings to your dawning radiance.

⁴ Lift up your eyes and look all around: they are all gathered; they have come to you. Your sons will come from far away, and your daughters on caregivers' hips. ⁵ Then you will see and be radiant; your heart will tremble and open wide, because the sea's abundance will be turned over to you; the nations' wealth will come to you.

How is your prayer journey going? Today is a great day to look back over the week. If you have missed a day or want to try again on a day, Sunday is a wonderful time to do just that. If you are in worship today, check in with your fellow travelers and see how they are doing. Give encouragement and also take their support as we continue on this journey.

When we come together in church we also pray together in the same space, saying the same words. But there is also a time for people to speak their own prayer requests, their joys and concerns. When it comes time to pray silently you are invited to pray for each other, for your families, for the church, for the people with whom you will have contact this week. Ask Jesus to love them all and take into his heart all of the requests you hear. Praying together is even stronger than we know.

Prayer

Gracious God, we are blessed and we are grateful... and still we need. We come to you seeking guidance and wisdom as we go forward with our faith community, Hope. Give us the insight to understand your desires for us. Give us the faith to trust your will. Give us the realization that it is our responsibility to do our part to make this work and worship pleasing to you. Give us hope for the future. With confidence in your love and gratitude in our hearts, we pray in Jesus name. Amen!