

HOPE UMC SUMMER OF PRAYER 2017

WEEK #3

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
- 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 3: Monday – Risking Faith

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-31

²² Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone. ²⁴ Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. ²⁵ Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed.

²⁷ Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." ²⁸ Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ And Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?"

Rick Warren says that faith always means risk. The greatest risk of all is how we relate to one another and how we relate to God – the risk is to do something about these relationships! You take a risk when you live with all your heart. Is it worth it? Absolutely!

Jesus said one of the greatest mistakes we can make is to play it safe with our lives. Remember – "if you try to keep your life for yourself you will lose it."

Prayer

Holy One who has given us the breath of life today we remember to breathe deeply, to rest, to take in, to pause before we act...And then to take in another deep breath poised on the edge and risk jumping in. Risk taking action, risk speaking up, risk using the gifts we have been given so that at the end of our life we can say with absolute clarity that no part of our existence was wasted in fear of failure or fear of success. Hold us, prepare us for the way to begin to offer the gift of our awakened presence full of love and light today. These and the prayers of our heart we lift up now in the silence...Amen.

By Tamara Lebal

Week 3: Tuesday – Four-legged Friends

Scripture: Genesis 1:24-25, 7:13-16

God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was.

That same day Noah, with his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Noah’s wife, and his sons’ three wives, went into the ark. ¹⁴ They and every kind of animal—every kind of livestock, every kind that crawls on the ground, every kind of bird^[a]— ¹⁵ they came to Noah and entered the ark, two of every creature that breathes. ¹⁶ Male and female of every creature went in, just as God had commanded him. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.^l

Many of us have animals in our lives that are important to us. Dogs, cats, horses, gerbils, parrots, ferrets, all God’s creatures, have become beloved pets and part of our families. As scripture tells us God called forth all of the animals. Later, St. Francis called them all brothers and sisters. These animals bring joy and purpose to our lives, as well as love. The pets in our lives bring us God’s unconditional love, lower our blood pressure (most of the time!) and bring us joy.

When we have a pet in our lives we have a duty to care for it (them!) and to ensure that their lives are lived as God would want them to be. Sometimes that means letting go of a wild animal that has graced our home or letting go of a cat or dog when our lives no longer can support the love and care these animals need and deserve.

What a blessing to have these animals in our lives! We need to remember to love, respect and care for them as we would any of God’s creatures.

Prayer

Dear God, you have given us care over all living things. Protect and bless the animals who give us companionship and delight, make us their true friends and worthy companions. Help us to give them the same love, respect and care that You give to all of Your creatures, including us. Amen.

Week 3: Wednesday – Searching for the Lost

Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. ² The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³ Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose someone among you had one hundred sheep and lost one of them. Wouldn’t he leave the other ninety-nine in the pasture and search for the lost one until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he is thrilled and places it on his shoulders. ⁶ When he arrives home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes both heart and life than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to change their hearts and lives.

⁸ “Or what woman, if she owns ten silver coins and loses one of them, won’t light a lamp and sweep the house, searching her home carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, joy breaks out in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who changes both heart and life.”

In each of the stories Jesus told the searcher goes to unbelievable lengths to find what has been lost. The shepherd leaves 99 sheep to find one and the woman practically ruins her home cleaning up to find the coin. The third story of loss in this series is the parable of the prodigal son who is lost but finds his way home (Luke 15:11-32). And we know what the father does – he welcomes home the lost son despite what happened.

Who are the lost in your life? Take time to pray to find those people in your life and who are far from home, who are floundering, who need connection in their lives. Ask God for the strength and insight to help however you can – through prayers, through helping the lost be found. As disciples we are called to connect the lost to God through the unconditional love and shepherding of Jesus.

Prayer:

*I asked for strength that I might achieve, I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things
I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness that I might feel
The need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life, I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing I had asked for, but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered; I am, among all men, most richly
Blessed. Amen.*

Unknown Soldier, American Civil War

Week 3: Thursday – Getting a Faith Lift

Scripture: John 14:16-26

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion,^[a] who will be with you forever. ¹⁷ This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can’t receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.

¹⁸ “I won’t leave you as orphans. I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” ²² Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked, “Lord, why are you about to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

²³ Jesus answered, “Whoever loves me will keep my word. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever doesn’t love me doesn’t keep my words. The word that you hear isn’t mine. It is the word of the Father who sent me. ²⁵ “I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. ²⁶ The Companion,^[b] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you.

Sometimes we get hungry, hungry for God in our souls. We want the intimacy with God, so it’s time for a faith lift! This is when we deliberately seek out God, pursue our relationship with passion and make our faith top priority. This faith lift can come through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, praise, singing, Bible study and is usually needed because the distractions in our life cause us to cut back on what we need to keep our relationship with God whole.

When we have a faith lift we can overcome complacency and view challenges as opportunities. But it takes deliberate work and commitment. Are you ready? As you pray today ask God about a faith lift and what that might look like to you. Do you need to set aside time for God in your day? Read the Bible more? Worship more often? Let God give you guidance as you work toward your faith lift!

Prayer

God of goodness, love and light, give me yourself, for you are sufficient for me. If I were to ask for anything less I would always be in want, for in you I have it all. Help me to increase my faith and be blessed by You. Amen.

Week 3: Friday – Reflecting on the Day

Scripture: Psalm 51:6-12

And yes, you want truth in the most hidden places; You teach me wisdom in the most secret space.^[a]

⁷ *Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow.*

⁸ *Let me hear joy and celebration again; let the bones you crushed rejoice once more.*

⁹ *Hide your face from my sins; wipe away all my guilty deeds!*

¹⁰ *Create a clean heart for me, God; put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!*

¹¹ *Please don't throw me out of your presence; please don't take your holy spirit away from me.*

¹² *Return the joy of your salvation to me and sustain me with a willing spirit.*

When do you pray? Do you think about God and how God fit into your life as you review the day? It's a great practice to do just that. Take time to sit, take your deep breaths and be still.

Then read this passage from Psalm 51. We are reminded that God will purify us, heal us, sustain us and restore us. Knowing that, take a moment of silence, then go through your day again in your mind. Think about when you might have been far away from God and even whether there was something that happened that you would like to do over again. Write them down if you can. Then ask God for forgiveness

Then, remember all of the times of blessing, grace and God's presence during the day. Write those down as well. As part of your prayer time thank God for every one of those moments. End your time of reflection of your day by giving thanks and asking God to go into the next day forgiven, renewed and restored.

Prayer

Holy One, thank you for the grace and blessings you have given me today. Thank you for your mercy and forgiveness. I ask for a clean heart to be created within me and to be restored to the joy of life in You. Sustain in me a generous and willing spirit to live my life for and with you.

Amen.

Week 3: Saturday – Free Prayer

How is your prayer journey going? We are half way through the six weeks. Are you finding new ways to fit prayer into your daily routine? Prayer is foundational to EVERYTHING we do as individuals following Christ and as members of a faith community.

Are there prayers that have been an integral part of your faith life? Are you ready to incorporate new prayers?

For this day, you are invited to write down and pray any prayers that mean a lot to you. If you would like to share them with the faith community you can email Pastor Laurie (pastor@hopeumcmn.org) or put them in the prayer box a church and they will be shared. Names not required!

Or if you are looking for new prayers, I invite you to read the *Upper Room* devotional that can be obtained at church or go online and search for prayers for whatever you need in your life right now. You might find something totally unexpected! This is your day to explore and experience prayer in a new way.

Prayer:

Lord, bless and keep me as I continue to explore my relationship with you. I know you love me and keep me. Help me to find the ways to love and keep others as I go through my daily routine. Help me to see opportunities for love and service and to live passionately as a child of God! Amen.

Week 3: Sunday – Church Memories

Scripture: Colossians 1:15-18

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation,^[a]
¹⁶ Because all things were created by him: both in the heavens and on the earth,
the things that are visible and the things that are invisible. Whether they are thrones or powers,
or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. ⁷ He existed before all
things, and all things are held together in him. ⁸ He is the head of the body, the church, who is
the beginning, the one who is firstborn from among the dead so that he might occupy the first
place in everything.*

What does it mean to you to be part of the body of Christ? How about to be part of a faith community? Does it mean the same thing? We know Jesus is the head of our faith and he is also the head of the church which is his body. Being in a faith community is very much an integral part of being a Christian.

And being part of a faith community means attending worship with others who are part of the body of Christ. If you were in worship today, how was it for you? Did you feel God's presence? Did you leave renewed in the Spirit? Or did something happen that did not sit well with you? Bring it all to God in prayer and remember that all of the body of Christ are humans. We sit in the pews next to one another, each with our own backgrounds, issues, fears and hopes. And yet we are ALL necessary to the body – no one more important than another – but no one less important either!

What is your experience of church? Did you grow up going to church? If so, what is your fondest memory? Do you attend worship regularly? Write down why or why not that might be so.

Then pray for the church, for the communities of faith in Jesus Christ. Pretend you are holding the whole church in your hands. Hold it gently and pray for everyone in it, together. Pray for the building, the people, the work, the pastor, the past, the future, for yourself in church. Even pray for the people yet to come. Ask for Christ to surround the church and hold it safe, accept its flaws and help it to continue his work each day.

Prayer

Christ Jesus, thank you for the church. We fail, but we repent and try again. Please saturate us with your Holy Spirit. Let us be the most real, loving and accepting church we can be. Let us become the church scripture shows us and calls us to be. Amen.