

HOPE UMC SUMMER OF PRAYER 2017

WEEK #6

Supplies You May Want to Use

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

This is the last week of our prayer journey together! May you have found meaning and use for it in your daily routine. Don't stop now! Once you have completed this week find a good devotional, go through the 6 weeks again or start composing your own thoughts and prayers. And, give this prayer journey to a family member or friend who might need it. Passing on our faith is what we are called to do.

If you would like to give an evaluation of this series, your thoughts and ideas are welcome! Just email Pastor Laurie at pastor@hopeumcmn.org or send her a note.

You are still 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!

PRAY 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, leaving time to listen to God's answers.
- When you are finished, take a deep breath and give thanks for this day in your life.

Week 6: Monday – God’s Time

Scripture: Matthew 24:36-39

³⁶ *“But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. Only the Father knows. ³⁷ As it was in the time of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Human One.^[f] ³⁸ In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. ³⁹ They didn’t know what was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. The coming of the Human One^[g] will be like that.*

God’s time, which is not what we can know at all, is the time beyond death. Death frees us from the structure of time and brings us into God’s time, which we believe is timeless. That makes speculation about the afterlife impossible because beyond death there is no past or present, no first or last, no future. It is all God’s time.

What do we know? That God is in us, around us, our all in all. The events of the end of time, resurrection of the body and the coming of Jesus once again will not be separated by time for those who are no longer living in this mortal time. Once we pass into God’s time we will be part of God’s world and will live in God’s timelessness.

But for those of us who still live in this time, it is important to believe that the new life in Christ is something we can comprehend. If we are true believers we live in the trust of God. That is all God asks of us.

Take a moment to sit in silence and think about death. Who have you lost in your life? How do you remember them? If you are remembering them they are still living – living in God’s time with God. What about your death? Have you ever thought about what you want people to remember of you? Contemplate what you would say about yourself at your funeral. Then, think about what you wouldn’t want anyone to remember! Are they things you need to change now? End your silence by thanking God for this day and every day you live in this world, this time.

Prayer:

God of us all, you surround us, you are in us, and you hold us tightly to you. But not so tightly that we are captive, just tight enough that we feel loved and supported. Your love and mercy help us to live out each day knowing we cannot fail even when things go wrong. And, when we think about life eternal with you, Lord, help us to be open to all possibilities and to remember that things happen in YOUR time not in ours. Grant us patience and right living until we see you face to face. Amen.

Week 6: Tuesday – Our Stories

Scripture: Hebrews 11:23-40

²³ By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months when he was born, because they saw that the child was beautiful and they weren't afraid of the king's orders. ²⁴ By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he was grown up. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated with God's people instead of having the temporary pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He thought that the abuses he suffered for Christ were more valuable than the treasures of Egypt, since he was looking forward to the reward.

²⁷ By faith he left Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger. He kept on going as if he could see what is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, in order that the destroyer could not touch their firstborn children. ²⁹ By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if they were on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried it, they were drowned. ³⁰ By faith Jericho's walls fell after the people marched around them for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute wasn't killed with the disobedient because she welcomed the spies in peace.

³² What more can I say? I would run out of time if I told you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. ³³ Through faith they conquered kingdoms, brought about justice, realized promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ put out raging fires, escaped from the edge of the sword, found strength in weakness, were mighty in war, and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured and refused to be released so they could gain a better resurrection.

³⁶ But others experienced public shame by being taunted and whipped; they were even put in chains and in prison. ³⁷ They were stoned to death, they were cut in two, and they died by being murdered with swords. They went around wearing the skins of sheep and goats, needy, oppressed, and mistreated. ³⁸ The world didn't deserve them. They wandered around in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground. ³⁹ All these people didn't receive what was promised, though they were given approval for their faith. ⁴⁰ God provided something better for us so they wouldn't be made perfect without us.

The stories in the Bible of people who have lived out their faith are an inspiration to us, which is why they are listed in this passage – and they are also important to God! When we bring our stories to God through worship and prayer, we open ourselves to God's grace and love.

Take a moment to think about your own story, as if you were going to tell it to a friend. Hit the highlights and the low times, the moments of pride, the things you regret. Now, offer your story to God and as you do, invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and to help you feel how much your story matters to God.

Prayer

This is my story, Jesus, very ordinary. There are small victories and signs of new life, but also struggles and grief. I offer my story to you, Jesus, as a way of letting you in and becoming one with you. Thank you for hearing my story, thank you for helping me make my story. Amen.

Week 6: Wednesday – Prayer Life

Scripture: *Philippians 1:3-11*

³ I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. ⁴ I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy. ⁵ I'm glad because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the gospel from the time you first believed it until now. ⁶ I'm sure about this: the one who started a good work in you will stay with you to complete the job by the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ I have good reason to think this way about all of you because I keep you in my heart. You are all my partners in God's grace, both during my time in prison and in the defense and support of the gospel. ⁸ God is my witness that I feel affection for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

⁹ This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. ¹⁰ I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ. ¹¹ I pray that you will then be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes from Jesus Christ, in order to give glory and praise to God.

The Apostle Paul certainly knew the value of prayer in the life of the followers of Jesus. It is at the heart of his life in holiness (of whol-iness!). You have been practicing prayer for the past six weeks. How does it make you feel?

We all strive for a life of holiness and wholeness. How would you feel to know others are praying for you for this? If it makes you uncomfortable to think of others praying for your faith life, why is that? While this is a very personal part of everyone's life, as members of a faith community we are called to support one another and most often this happens in the form of prayer.

Today I invite you to grab your Hope UMC directory and pray for the people in this faith community! Pray for their well being, wholeness and holiness, and whatever else you want to include. Whether or not you know them, pray for them. If we are all praying for one another what wonders can be found! A life of holiness brings us closer to God and one another and frees us from our fears.

Prayer:

God of wholeness we thank you for the instrument of prayer. Communication is so important to us and through prayer we can communicate with you and know you are there for us. We celebrate the healing you bring to this world through prayer and through miracles and through our own actions. We celebrate being part of your wondrous plan and we praise your holy name. Amen.

Week 6: Thursday – Using Our Gifts

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:8-11

Above all, show sincere love to each other, because love brings about the forgiveness of many sins. 9 Open your homes to each other without complaining. 10 And serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God's diverse gifts. 11 Whoever speaks should do so as those who speak God's word. Whoever serves should do so from the strength that God furnishes. Do this so that in everything God may be honored through Jesus Christ. To him be honor and power forever and always. Amen.

We are reminded in this passage that God is honored by us showing sincere love for one another, opening our homes to one another and serving God by using the gifts given to each one of us. These gifts are diverse, and they are all needed to bring the kingdom of God to fruition. When we think of God-given gifts some may think of musicians or writers or painters. Those are all gifts, but so are being good with numbers, working with wood, being a good parent. All things given by God for us to use in life are gifts.

Two women, Mary Ruth Broz and Barbara Flynn, give us the use of the gift of quilting to bring together our gifts and our life in Jesus:

How steady are your grace-full hands as they tirelessly take the remnants of what we tend to discard as useless, creating a pattern of surprising unity. You bring together these isolated events into a meaningful design of wholeness, finding amid our turmoil and struggle enough goodness to bind them together.

Are they talking about the quilter or about Jesus? How exciting that it is both! That is what happens when we use our gifts to the glory of God – we become one, we create what we never thought possible and we see a much bigger picture.

Take a moment to consider what your God-given gifts are, and how you are using them. Is it to the glory of God? Do you need to take a leap of faith and use them? They are wondrous tools for our lives, the lives of others and for God's plan!

Prayer

O Quilter of what we deem worthless, show us what we do not easily see. Grant us the courage to take our gifts out into the light so they can be seen by others and used by you to create unity, peace and justice in this world. Help us to see that when we use our gifts we are truly bring your body in this world. Amen.

Week 6: Friday – Radical Hospitality

Scripture: Romans 12:9-13

Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. ¹¹ Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! ¹² Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home.

There are some who love to entertain and some who prefer not to, but all of us, as followers of Jesus, need to show hospitality. We know hospitality is offering food or shelter to someone in need, or inviting people into our homes for fellowship.

Radical hospitality is what God shows to us – giving love, forgiveness, mercy and grace without us earning it and just because God loves us. When we live faithful lives we are called to provide that same radical hospitality to others.

That means a smile for someone even if we don't know them or don't know why they are here. It means stopping to help the person on the side of the road even if it frightens us to do so. Being hospitable also means letting someone else speak when they are saying things that make us want to scream, and listening to people's stories without judgment and without trying to "fix" them. It means going beyond what is safe, comfortable and easy, all in the effort to share with all people the love of God.

Radical hospitality also includes standing up for people who cannot stand up for themselves, raising your voice to promote justice and peace, and speaking God's truth. This would all be very frightening if we didn't know that Jesus' resurrection was a victory over death and fear. We have God with us!

Take time in silence to think about practicing radical hospitality. Have you done that? Or have you missed a chance to do it? Why? What changes might you need to make in your thinking to allow yourself to practice hospitality that goes beyond what is comfortable but what makes a great difference in the lives of others?

Prayer

God we thank you for the love you give to us, the hospitality you show us no matter how badly we act. Help us to have the strength and courage to practice this radical hospitality to others so that we may continue to work through you to transform this world. Amen.

Week 6: Saturday – Praying Continually

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-17

¹² Brothers and sisters, we ask you to respect those who are working with you, leading you, and instructing you. ¹³ Think of them highly with love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are disorderly. Comfort the discouraged. Help the weak. Be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure no one repays a wrong with a wrong, but always pursue the good for each other and everyone else. ¹⁶ Rejoice always. ¹⁷ Pray continually.

As we are coming to the end of our six week prayer journey you are invited to take a day journey that will include prayer! We are told by Paul to pray continually, pray without ceasing, and you are invited to give it a try! Put on your walking shoes, your car, your wheelchair, whatever and get ready to go.

Set aside a good amount of time for this journey. Put on headphones if you'd like and head out the door! Take a walk or ride around your neighborhood, whether in a city or in assisted living. Go slowly, taking time to see everything going on around you, noticing your neighbors, noticing the beauty of God's world surrounding.

As you do this, pray continually for everything you see! Pray for your neighbor (with a smile), pray for the animals you see along the way, pray for the wondrous plants that are inside and out. But also pray for the crying child you see, or the arguing family. And the passing vehicles – pray for who is in the car, for their journey. Give a prayer of thanks for the sun or the breeze, give thanks you are able to get around, pray for your ability to see. For however long you dedicate to this outward journey be sure it includes continual prayer! (Pope Francis did say it was OK to pray in the car with your eyes open so let's go with that!!)

Once you are back home sit down and be silent for a moment. What did you see that surprised you? What hadn't you noticed before now? How does it make you feel to have prayed without ceasing for that amount of time – were you able to do it? End this outward journey in conversation with God and with thanks you could take the journey.

Prayer

Blessed God, what a treat to behold so much of this world and at the same time hold it all in prayer. I praise you for doing this for all of us all of the time and for giving me the opportunity to experience ceaseless prayer. Please hold my family, friends and neighbors in your care, as well as everyone and everything I experienced on my journey. Thank you! Amen.

Week 6: Sunday – Go Ye Into the World

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go.

¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ Jesus came near and spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

This is how Matthew ends his gospel – with the Great Commission. This is the passage of which we are sometimes leery because we are reminded that Jesus calls us to GO OUT beyond our comfort, beyond what we know, and make disciples in the world. We think of this as the dreaded "e" word – evangelism and want to look away. Can't we just be faithful and stay warm and safe and comfortable?

The answer is no! Jesus gives us the promise of his presence with us forever. This is a promise, a trust and a challenge to us to invite others into faith and into a life of support, love and abundance in Jesus. He has entrusted his people to our care and Jesus goes to heaven. These people are young, old, wealthy, scrambling to feed their children, sick, healthy, of every color, nation and culture in the world. They are all made in the image of God and are part of God's plan – and they don't know it yet! We are called to let them know about God through Jesus Christ and to bring God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and presence to all people so they too can be part of God's family.

Read this passage aloud. What is your reaction to it? Does it distress you or are you ready to go out? What do you need to go ye into the world and make disciples? Whatever is standing in your way, ask God to help you move it aside so you can take Jesus' commission into the community.

Prayer:

Precious Jesus, thank you. Thank you that you will be with us forever, until you bring us into your shining loving presence. Use me, use my life. Help me see that I am capable of so much more than I know, certainly capable of showing your love to others! Give me strength to take up the challenge and bring your message of hope to others. Amen.

FAVORITE PRAYERS

Below are a couple of prayers you have provided to share. It is always wonderful to share our practices and prayers.

Prayer upon rising to a new day:

*Life has begun again, Father.
You have given me another day of grace*

Another day to live:

*to speak to someone
to touch something
to ask for something
to take something
to give something*

*Whatever I made of this day,
Whatever I become this day,
I put in your hands.
Amen.*

Geoff Popham shared this prayer - a variation on a pastoral prayer he first heard back when he was a teenager growing up at Hennepin Avenue UMC:

If there is...

*Help me, Lord, to remember those who I have not remembered or cared for as I should
If there is a child who needs my love or attention in a special way, help me to freely give it
If there is an older person, who through my inattention has felt lonely or deserted, help me
stand, again, close
If there is someone going through deep, trouble water who could find in me a rock to cling to,
show me a way to be that rock
If there is a friend or neighbor nearby that I have failed to welcome, may I reach out my hand
If there is someone whom I love who is far away, let a card or telephone call be a reminder that
I care
Make, somehow, real to me
The pain of others that I do not feel
The anxiety of others that does not gnaw at me
The sorrow of others that my happiness ignores
And
The weakness of others that my strength does not know
In Jesus name,
Amen*