



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Teach Us to Pray

*He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray ..." Luke 11:1*

What is prayer? Prayer, in its most basic sense, is opening ourselves up to the presence of God. Prayer is not primarily about praising God, confessing to God, thanking God or making requests of God. The primary activity of prayer is making ourselves conscious of the presence of God.

Psalm 46 has one of the most haunting lines in scripture when it says, "Be still and know that I am God." To be Christian is to believe that, above everything else, this is God's world. We believe that God is with us every moment of every day and, moreover, we need God's help to live in this world in life giving ways. Psalm 46 calls us to shut-up and listen. Just listen. Open ourselves up to God's presence before we do anything else.

Have you ever known someone who had a lot to say but who never stopped to listen? Most of us have known such people. They always want to share their opinions, their desires, their feelings, but they just seem to glaze over if someone else starts to talk. That is the way a lot of people approach prayer. In the early nineties I was working with a group of Russian immigrant Christians. They were part of a Pentecostal tradition and their customary practice in worship during times of prayer was to shout out their prayers to God all at the same time. They would spend several minutes, with their eyes closed and their hands raised, shouting out their petitions to God. And when I say shout, I mean shout! It was sort of like being in the crowd at a football game. After a service one day one of them commented to me that even he sometimes thought that they got too loud. He told me that he believed that some of his brothers and sisters thought God was deaf and wouldn't hear them unless they shouted.

Psalm 46 tells us, be still. Be still and feel the presence of God all around you. Open yourself up to that presence. Paul tells the Romans that when we run out of words, the Spirit fills in our prayer with sighs too deep for words. Prayer is first about opening ourselves up to the presence of God.

Prayer is also confessional. Someone once said, "Why should I confess my sins to God? God already knows all that I've done." And that is true. But, it's amazing how short our memories can be about what we have done and who we have hurt. One of the most important steps in the typical twelve step program dealing with addictions is to make a moral inventory of sorts; to acknowledge to yourself, to God and to another person,

all the ways you have hurt yourself and those around you. Do you do that because you think the people you have hurt don't know they were hurt? No. You do it as a way to face up to what you have done; to face up to the harm you have caused.

An important element of prayer is to admit who we are to God and, thereby, to ourselves. Admitting who we are and what we have done with our lives is a way of opening ourselves up the presence of God and is a necessary step in discipleship. Prayer is confessional.

Prayer is conversational. Many of us can identify with the Disciples of Jesus who say to him, "Teach us to pray." I've had many people come to me over the years asking for help in praying. They are afraid that they must use certain words or certain forms, or their prayers won't be heard.

But, prayer doesn't require any particular form. In the text from Luke, Jesus provides a form for what we have come to call the Lord's prayer. The prayer Jesus offers is very conversational. God is addressed as Father, or some would even say, "Daddy." In *The Message*, a translation of the Bible into modern English by Eugene Peterson, the Lord's prayer is rendered this way:

"When you pray, say,  
Father,  
Reveal who you are.  
Set the world right.  
Keep us alive with three square meals.  
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.  
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil."

Think about it this way. If you see someone once or twice every few years, you might tend to speak very formally. On the other hand, if you see someone pretty much all day every day, and you get to know one another very well, your speech becomes much less formal. Remember, God is with us every moment of every day. You don't need the formalities.

A lot of my praying is on the go. When I am driving to see someone in the hospital, I'll be praying while I'm on the way. Talking with God about what is happening in that person's life and what they need. I pray knowing that, just as God is with me, God is already where I am going and knows what that person needs.

When I mess up I'll often laugh at myself and talk with God about it. In my mind, I can imagine God laughing at me too; not in a hurtful way but as a good friend who knows me well. I'm not suggesting you treat God as just another friend, but if you truly believe that God is always with you, and knows all there is to know about you, you can afford to be a little less formal in your praying.

And, along those same lines, if you are mad at God you might as well go ahead and make that part of your prayers too. Look at it this way. If you are mad at God, do you think that God doesn't already know that? You aren't hiding your anger from God, and until you openly acknowledge it you might have a hard time dealing with that anger. Trust me on this. God can take it! We worship the God who, from the cross, said "forgive them, they don't know what they are doing." God can deal with your anger and won't call down the lightning on your head for it. Prayer should be conversational.

Prayer should be our primary work as Christians.

If prayer is what opens us up to the presence of God, and if prayer is what allows us to draw on the power of God to live in this world, prayer should be the primary activity of all Christians. Yet, how much time do you spend each day in prayer? I'm willing to bet that most Christians do not spend more than five minutes a day in prayer, if that. And five minutes a day in prayer works out to around 30 hours a year; about .3% of the hours in a year. I tend to think that one thing that happens when we die is we become aware of all the time we wasted that we could have spent in prayer and we become aware of all that might have been accomplished with prayer. They say that the protestant reformer Martin Luther spent several hours in prayer each and every day, unless he was faced with a particularly difficult task. On those days he spent even more time in prayer. Prayer should be the primary work of a Christian, but most of us never show up for work.

I am not suggesting that prayer is a way to manipulate God. God is not a cosmic vending machine and prayer is not the coin we put into the machine. But centuries of experience in the church witnesses to the fact that there is power in prayer. Power to change us and to affect the world around us. Prayer is a part of God's creation and is a mechanism that God can use to work in the world.

## **News from Nanette Crowell's Companions in Christ**

*By Rodger Klein*

Our Sunday School Class has some things that we want to share with the congregation. First, we have changed the name of our class from Companions in Christ to *Nanette Crowell's Companions in Christ*. This name change was done so that we would always keep Nanette in the front of our minds and honor her memory as the founder and leader of our class. We will miss her leadership and contribution to our class and we believe that naming our class in her memory is an appropriate way for us to honor her. All adults are welcome to participate in our class. We meet at 9:45 am every Sunday morning.

Second, Pastor Meaker recently asked us to watch a video about poverty in our country and to consider how poverty affects our community. The video was very informative and after watching, we discussed ways for our class to help with this serious local and national problem. Because we are local, we were looking for ways that we can help in our local community. After some discussion, we agreed that we will help in two ways now, but continue to look for additional ways in which we can help. Our first commitment is to sponsor one of the four meals that Trinity does each year at the 61<sup>st</sup> Avenue United Methodist Church. We will sponsor that event financially, and we will be there to participate in the serving of the meal and the worship service with that congregation. Our second commitment is that we will lead the effort at Trinity to collect food for the Graceworks food pantry. We will be setting up a collection station in the church where all members can bring non-perishable food items that will be given to Graceworks for use within our local community to help those in need. Food items can be brought in every week, but we will concentrate this effort on First Sundays. Please help us collect these food items to help those in need within our own local community.

## **Charge Conference**

It's that time of the year again. For those of you new to the United Methodist Church, a 'Charge' is a Church or group of Churches under the leadership of an appointed pastor. All members of a Charge are responsible for its governance. To appreciate how deeply the concept touches Methodist polity and practice, turn to UMH 413, *A Charge to Keep I Have*. This hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1762. The Charge Conference, made up of the pastor, lay leadership and members, is to meet at least once a year in a meeting chaired by the District Superintendent. It is at this meeting that the Pastor's compensation is set and the leadership for the coming year is approved.

In years past the District Superintendent has come to each Charge to hold this conference. This year the Columbia District will be meeting in clusters. Our cluster is made up of ten Charges. There will be separate sessions for each Church and a joint worship service for all the churches in the cluster. The cluster that includes Trinity will meet at Epworth UMC on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Our business meeting is scheduled from 5:15 to 5:30. There will be a joint worship service from 4:00 to 5:00. I encourage everyone who is available to attend the worship service and the separate business meeting.

## Thursday Morning Bible Study

We have begun our Thursday morning Bible Study on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. Anyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. Based upon the requests I have received we have begun a study of the Gospel of Mark.

## The Poverty and Justice Bible

*<sup>21</sup>I, the LORD, hate and despise your religious celebrations and your times of worship.*

*<sup>22</sup>I won't accept your offerings or animal sacrifices— not even your very best.*

*<sup>23</sup>No more of your noisy songs! I won't listen when you play your harps.*

*<sup>24</sup>But let justice and fairness flow like a river that never runs dry. <sup>1</sup>*

*Amos 5:21-24*

The ending of this passage probably sounds more familiar in the NRSV translation: *<sup>24</sup>But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.* These were the words of Martin Luther King in his “I have a Dream” speech. He used this passage of Amos the same way that Amos used it when speaking to Samaria. As noted several places throughout scripture, God is not interested in worship unless it springs from a heart that embraces God’s vision for the world. And, despite the teachings of some Christians that God’s vision for the world is a world with the “faithful” raptured away and everything else in flames, scripture insists, again and again, that God desires a world governed by justice and righteousness and compassion and mercy. A world where God’s people are concerned about the welfare of one another.

*<sup>13</sup>For now there are faith,  
hope, and love.*

*But of these three,  
the greatest is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13*

Paul sums up God’s vision for how we are to live in the world in 1 Corinthians 13. In the final analysis, Christians either have love, i.e. concern for the welfare of all God’s people, or they have nothing.

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***The Poverty & Justice Bible*** is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: The Contemporary English Version.* (1995). (Am 5:21–24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to [www.Justicebible.org](http://www.Justicebible.org).

## Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Mac McAfee	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Erin McKibben	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

## Up-Coming Sermons

**September 6<sup>th</sup>: Whom does God Love?** “God Hates \_\_\_\_\_.” It is not uncommon to see protest signs outside of the Supreme Court and other places proclaiming who God hates. However, our preconceived notions about the nature of God are brought into doubt by the curious story of the Syrophenician woman. My texts are James 2:1-10 and Mark 7:24-30.

**September 13<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: Who Do You Say That I Am?** Jesus asks this question of his disciples and it remains an important question for us today. Who we say Jesus is affects how we live in this world, the Gospel we convey and how that Gospel is received. My Texts are James 3:1–12 and Mark 8:27–38.

## Worship Leader's Schedule

### September 6

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**

Charles & Cheryl Wilson, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

### September 13

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Pat Moran & Maurice Edwards, **Greeters**

Herb Haynes & Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

## Announcements

Don't forget our work day at church **Saturday, September 12**. We will be working both inside and outside. Mark this date on your calendar!

The "**Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ**" Sunday School class is studying, "**Loving God.**" We have extra books and extra chairs if you would care to join our class. **The class begins promptly at 9:45.** All are welcome to this time of learning and fellowship.

As you read earlier, the **Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School** class is collecting non-perishable food items for Grace Works. The following is a listing of the items that they are most in need of. This collection is a ministry of our church that each person can participate in and is a meaningful way to serve God as we serve others in our community. Thank you for your contributions.

### Pantry Items

Canned Ham or Chicken

Crackers, Spaghetti Sauce (in plastic jars or cans)

Canned Beef Stew

Jelly

Boxed Meals (like Hamburger Helper)

Boxed Mashed Potatoes

Rice

Canned Fruit

Pasta

### Fuel Bags

All individual sizes please.

Juice Boxes

Shelf stable liquid milk boxes

Canned/Package Meat with crackers

Cereal

Microwaveable Meat Meals

Easy Mack

Pudding Cups

Cheese or Peanut Butter Crackers

**September Birthdays**

**Elva Beard, Joann Harper, Jessica Bauguess, Wanda Folds, G.L. Jones, Bill LeCates**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**