

November 16, 2014

Prayer is one of the ways we communicate with God. It is conversation - talking together - listening together - with a generous, caring Friend. Prayer conversation with God can be many things. It can be:

- praising God's great goodness,
- asking for a particular need to be answered,
- listening to God or listening for God's message or response,
- wrestling and questioning God about a problem we have,
- requesting God's wisdom or presence or healing or . . . ,
- questioning and challenging God,
- thanking God for life or blessings or . . . , and on.

Our congregation has a Prayer Chain Ministry that is praying for your prayer requests. You are invited to fill in the prayer request card on the back of the Welcome card, fill in your prayer request and either put it in the offering plate or give it directly to Pastor Wendee. Following worship, a member of the Prayer Ministry Team will collect the prayer requests, will give Pastor Wendee a list of all the requests and will email them to the Prayer Chain who will pray for your request through the week. Please be sure the check the box(es) designating how and where you want your prayer request(s) shared. Thank you for the privilege of allowing us to share in your life through prayer.

You are invited to pray for the following prayer requests:

Pray for healing and strength for all who are dealing with cancer or other illnesses including Laura, Sheri, and those who care for them.

Prayers for the family of Leahlah and all those who are victims of senseless acts of violence.

Prayers for Denise and all those in need of a job.

Prayers for Adeline and all those struggling to adjust to new circumstances and new living conditions.

Prayers for the family of Ken, Jen's father, and all those who have suffered the loss of a loved one.

Prayers for those in nursing homes or home bound: John S., Marilyn S., Edith M., Gwen S., Louise L., Dorothy D., Pat F., Ellie M.

Prayers of celebration for anniversaries, birthdays, and other special occasions.

Luke 16:13-14

(The Message)

- 13 No worker can serve two bosses: He'll either hate the first and love the second Or adore the first and despise the second. You can't serve both God and the Bank.
- 14 When the Pharisees, a money-obsessed bunch, heard him say these things, they rolled their eyes, dismissing him as hopelessly out of touch.

Acts 20:35b

(The Message)

You'll not likely go wrong here if you keep remembering that our Master said, 'You're far happier giving than getting.'

Welcome to *faith connections*! *faith connections* can be used a variety of ways: from tossing it into the wastebasket, to reading it straight through some time during the week, to using it daily (or here and there during the week) as a means to reflect on scripture and your faith. Written by Pastor Wendee.

11-16-14 *faith connections*!

Sunday – As Christians, we are on a faith journey together as a faith-family with God. Oak Creek Community United Methodist Church (OCCUMC) is a household of God that encourages each of its members and friends to respond to God’s grace in their lives by reaching out to, for, and with others. Five weeks ago, we started our focus on stewardship of God’s abundant resources in our lives. We have been focusing on six of those resources: daily prayer, Bible reading, faithful worship attendance, witnessing to others about the saving Good News of Jesus Christ, financial giving growing to the biblical standard of the 10% tithe, and giving of time through hands-on service. Today’s focus is financial giving and sharing God’s abundance with others. What do you feel when you give? How does sharing with others change your perception of others? When you give, do you expect something in return? God’s grace is freely given and there is nothing you can do or not do that will change the gift of grace. Give thanks today for God’s abundant grace.

Monday – Here at OCCUMC, we encourage each other to give in proportion to our sense of blessing. Giving lies at the heart of Christian living, our theology, and our identity. We give to causes that matter to us, but God is asking us to give to others because of our life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. When we desire to deepen our personal relationship with Jesus by trusting in God’s abundance, change happens in our lives and all around us. Where have you experienced God’s abundance?

Tuesday – Acts 20:35b states that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. Think about a time in your life when you had the joy of giving anonymously and no one found out who gifted them. What were the circumstances that led to your gift? How did you know that the person needed something that you could provide? Did you count the cost of the gift or did you give the gift freely? When and where and under what circumstances have you received a gift from someone but never found out who gave you the gift? How did their gesture make you feel? How did you pay the gift forward to another person? Today, leave a simple gift card on the desk of a co-worker who is going through a hard time or purposely prepay for the coffee of the person behind you in the drive through, or do some other random act of kindness that is not discovered. Enjoy!

Wednesday – Luke 16:13-15 implies that we cannot serve two masters and that God is the ultimate one we serve. In our culture, money gives us prestige, power, purpose, status, things, and so much more. Was there a time in your life when you did not have a lot of money? What did it feel like not to have the ability to purchase something you needed, wanted, or desired? Stewardship of God’s abundant resources is the ultimate act of trusting that God will provide. How hard is it for you to trust that God will provide for your daily needs? One way to develop and deepen our personal relationships with Jesus is to deeply trust God and let go of some of our anxiety about money. Pray today for God to show you a way to trust more in grace, to live in the moment, and to celebrate God’s abundance.

Thursday – Did you know that the Bible includes around 500 verses on prayer, fewer than 500 verses on faith, and over 2,000 verses on money and what money buys? Jesus talked a lot about money. Faith-families that not only talk about money, but give people the tools to save and share money help people grow in their discipleship. Disciples align their lives with the values that Jesus taught as proclaimed in the Bible. Jesus’ values reflect trusting in God’s abundance, sharing with our neighbors in need, using our resources wisely, and letting others see that God has made a difference in our lives. How are you reflecting God’s heart in your daily life?

Friday – OCCUMC’s mission statement declares that our faith-family will *Love and Serve All People*. Think of at least five specific ways we are already engaging in loving and serving others. Now, dream about five new ways we could love and serve others. Write these five down and share them with someone in your life. Better yet, give me a call! I love to dream!

Saturday – New believers and pre-Christians may struggle with any level of financial gift. This does not reflect their commitment to their faith-family, but does present a challenge to help them celebrate God’s abundance in their life. One of the most effective ways to walk the path toward proportional giving is to trust that giving first to God is a priority in your life. Setting a certain dollar amount or percentage of your income and putting that gift in the offering plate each week will free your mind to focus on the joy of giving and not the worry about not having enough. We find that it takes the average Christian about ten years to move toward giving a full 10% of their income to God. I find that, when people share their giving stories with me, as they close in on the 10% or tithe mark of giving, they tend to strive to give even more. It feels that good to share. It feels that good to not worry about money. It feels that good to know that God is using their gifts to help others in need and that their heart is being changed for the better through their giving. How, when, and why do you give? When have you experienced the joy of sharing gifts with others? What blessings have you received from God through your giving? Thank you!