

The Good News Gazette

The First Presbyterian Church
94-96 Main Street Chester, NY 10918
May 2016

The Practice of Prayer

A few weeks ago in our confirmation class we started talking about prayer. While preparing for the meeting I was looking through some of my resources I kept from my own confirmation class. In that packet I found a hand written document that read, "Suggestions for Prayer." It listed five suggestions:

1. Be natural, 2. Be sincere and honest, 3. Be specific, 4. Be quiet, 5. Be willing to obey and enjoy.

While this is a great list of suggestions to consider when entering a time of prayer I couldn't help but get hung up on #1 – Be natural. Aside from learning the Lord's Prayer in Sunday School, table graces, bed time prayers, and prayers read together in church services, prayer wasn't something ever really taught to become natural. Perhaps this is why so many of us Presbyterians look at the floor when asked for someone to pray. It isn't something we are comfortable with, at least not praying out loud in front of other people. But how do we make it more natural? Maybe not praying in front of other people, but just praying in general, how do we make it more natural?

In his book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence (a 17th century French Monk) learned how to practice the presence of God at all times. While doing dishes he would be praying to God, when out walking or doing chores he would pray to God. In every aspect of his life from waking to sleeping Brother Lawrence found a way to find God's presence in everything he did and offer up prayers. This became natural to him, but it certainly took a lot of time. In his book he states how it took him many years to get to the point of being able to see God in every place of his life and offer up prayers in everything he did during the day. It took different practices to help this to become something natural – something he didn't have to even think twice about. So perhaps we need to take up some practices for prayer to become a bit more natural for us.

There are many different practices we can try: lectio divina – meditating on scripture, journaling, coloring, drawing scripture out on paper, guided prayer, the examine prayer – looking over your day and seeing where you saw God, where you may have pushed God aside.

One that is often very easy to pick up is the centering breath prayer. Find a quiet place where there aren't too many distractions. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and then out through your mouth. While doing this ask God to enter this time and then reflect on what you might need today. Perhaps you are tired and need more energy, perhaps you are angry or upset and need some comfort or calmness. Once you have determined what you need, slowly return to a more normal breathing pattern but as you breathe in think about what you need – energy, comfort, joy. And as you breathe out think about what you need to get rid of, what is holding you back, or holding you up – breathe out your tiredness, your anger or frustration, sadness. While sometimes it's easy to think of just one word other times it can be done with considering your array of feelings for example:

Breathe in the breath of God Breathe out your cares and concerns

Breathe in the love of God Breathe out your doubts and despairs

Breathe in the grace of God Breathe out your fears and frustrations

Engage in this practice for about 3-5 minutes and see how much more centered you feel towards God and towards the situation at hand.

Pastor Erin

Deacons' Report

Our Shrove Tuesday night was a great success. St. Paul's Episcopal Church joined with us, which we greatly appreciated. It was fun working and getting to know some of St. Paul's congregation. We are talking of doing the same event next year. Our profits were \$409. Not bad for our first time in few years.

We will be helping the Kiwanis with the breakfast at the 5K Memorial Day Weekend Run. From this run, we get donations for the Food Pantry. Please consider helping if you have the time on May 28th.

The Deacons once again bought two tickets for the Roast Beef Dinner and they were distributed.

The Community Food Pantry went through a surprise inspection by someone from Cornwall Regional Food Bank and we passed the grade. Well done!

Roast Beef Dinner Update

Thank you again to all who helped make our Roast Beef Dinner Fundraiser such a success! Our net proceeds for the dinner was \$3,224.27. We hope to have a meeting soon to discuss possible options for a take-out dinner in the summer.

May Second Offering

Our second offering for Sunday, May 15th will be our Pentecost offering through the PCUSA. About 40% of this offering stays right here in our own community to help children and youth in need. The past few years we have purchased Payless gift cards for the social worker to hand out at the beginning of the school year to those who are in need of new shoes. The other 60% goes to help fund Young Adult Volunteers (YAV) across the US that are doing mission work for the PCUSA, Ministries for Youth, and Children-at-Risk across the world to help improve education and provide a safe haven. Please consider supporting this second offering on May 15th.

For our March Second offering for One Great Hour of Sharing we raised \$505 to help benefit Presbyterian Disaster Relief, Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self Development of People. Thank you all for your support to this mission of our larger church.

Women's Council

The Presbyterian Women's May Birthday Offering helps launch mission projects that improve the lives of women and children around the world today. Among the projects this year are:

1. Heartland 180; Overland Park, Kansas area – conducts intensive training sessions on character building, core values and life skills for youth between the ages of 11 and 17 who have been a part of the criminal justice system.
2. Habitat for Humanity in the East Bay and Silicon Valley areas of California to partner with more than 100 individuals and families to repair manufactured or mobile homes; mostly those people are low income, elderly or disabled living in homes built before 1980.
3. Building Minds in South Sudan will increase access to education for girls with the construction of a girls primary school, for levels one through eight, in Warrup State, South Sudan.

The Birthday Offering is 1 cent for each year of your life if you would like to participate! You will find a Birthday Cake on the back table for your gifts; checks should be made out to Women's Council if you would like to donate above and beyond a penny!! Thank You!!

Announcements

We are going to start keeping our prayer list more up-to-date. Starting May 15th we will be starting fresh. If there is a name currently on the prayer list that you would like to remain on the prayer list please contact Edna Babcock or the church office. Otherwise, all names will be removed. Thank you for your help!

Also, to help keep our prayer list up-to-date we will keep any names added on the list for 1 month. If no request is given to keep them on the list after 1 month they will be removed. If you find someone was removed that you wished to remain on please let us know and we will gladly add them to the list again. Thank you for your help in keeping us updated on who needs prayers.

Looking Ahead

May 3 – Confirmation Class 7pm

May 4 – Deacons Meeting 12pm

May 9 – New Membership Class 12pm

Music and Worship meeting 1pm

May 10 – Women’s Council meeting 1pm

May 11 – Buildings and Grounds meeting 5pm

May 14 – Covenant Brass Quintet at 4pm

May 15 – Pentecost Sunday – wear something red to worship

May 16 – New Membership Class 1pm

May 19 – Crafters meeting 3pm

May 22 – Confirmation in Sunday Worship

May 26 – Food Pantry Distribution 4-7pm

May 28 – Help with Kiwanis 5k Run breakfast

Pastor Erin will be away on Study Leave May 31st-June 3rd and away on vacation from June 4th-June 9th. Please contact the church office or a session member if there is an emergency.

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by May 23rd.

Pastor: Erin Moore

Moderator of Deacons: Okey Barrett (845) 651-4707

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If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).

