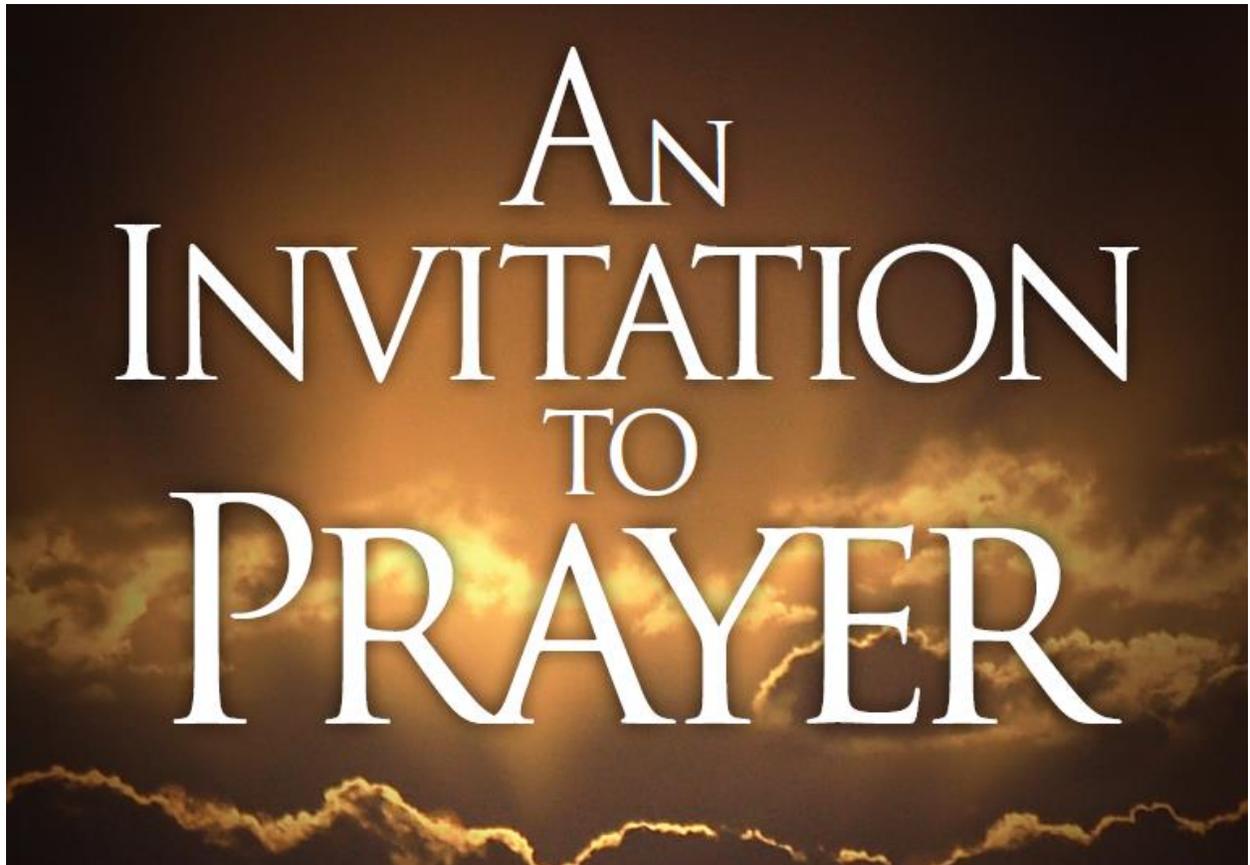


John Wesley United Methodist Church
Prayer Guide:
Thoughts and Tips on How to Pray



Includes specific prayers for the COVID-19 Pandemic

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PRAYER GUIDE

“Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.” Max Lucado.

The idea of praying regularly may seem daunting. But getting into the habit of daily prayer will bring you great reward. You will draw closer to God, you will be able to listen to God, you will rebalance your life by making God a priority rather than an after-thought. Through prayer, you will find peace, answers, comfort, hope and know the assurance of God’s love for you.

Timing. You can pray in the morning, afternoon or evening. It doesn’t matter so long as you are able to focus and be attentive to God’s Spirit. Many people find it helpful to begin their day in the presence of God, bringing before God the day ahead. You will find it most meaningful if you can spend at least fifteen minutes in quiet prayer, reflection, spiritual reading, meditation.

Location. You can pray anywhere! It could be the same place in your house, or on a walk, or in the backyard, or someplace different each day. But it should be a place where you will be least distracted. (Also recall Jesus’s teaching to “go into your inner room, close your door and pray...”.)

Position. If you have a position in which you are accustomed to praying, certainly use that. But you might try different positions during different times of prayer if for no other reason than to help your mind stay engaged. You may want to pray while walking. However, don’t let your physical position become a distraction from prayer: lying down may not be a great idea if you think you’ll fall asleep, while kneeling may not be advised for a long prayer if it means you can’t get back up again.

How to Pray. Don’t worry about doing it right. There are several approaches. Most of us are not accustomed to praying at a set time, or even many times throughout the day or for long periods of time, so the remainder of this guide contains suggestions and guidance. You’ll find scripture for meditation and prayer, prayer patterns, subjects for prayer, and formal prayers you may choose to read as the springboard for your own personal prayer.

Each individual’s prayer style is very personal, and this guide is designed to speak to many different styles. So don’t feel as though you have to follow every suggestion. Use the suggestions that work for you and don’t worry about those that don’t. While it is ideal to devote at least fifteen minutes in intentional pray, it is also meaningful to offer fifteen or thirty second prayers throughout the day, when something strikes you. Think of this as time to invest in your relationship with your loving God. Remember that you don’t have to talk the whole time you’re praying –God would like some time to speak to you! Sit (or stand, or walk) quietly. Listen. Breathe. Just BE in God’s presence.

“Be still and know that I am God.” *Psalm 46:10*

SCRIPTURES ABOUT PRAYER

O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; My flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. *Psalms 63:1*

Jesus told his disciples, "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!" *Matthew 6:5-8*

Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. *Matthew 7:7-8*

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6-7*

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. *I Thessalonians 5:18*

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. *Jeremiah 33:3*

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. *I John 5:14*

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. *Jeremiah 29:12*

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. *James 1:6*

March 27th – 28th
PRAYER VIGIL SUGGESTIONS FOR COVID-19

• Pray that everyone – leaders, congressional members, media, experts, and others would set aside their personal agendas and desires, and be open to the leading of God’s Spirit. May there be collaboration, not competition. Pray that God’s wisdom prevail as our leaders make decisions.

• Pray for a right resolution to this crisis that is as quick and effective as possible

• Pray for health care providers, first responders, hospital and medical personnel who put their own health on the line for others.

• Pray for researchers and scientists working to find cures and vaccines for the virus

• Pray for those throughout the world who have the virus, that there may be healing

• Pray for families who have lost loved ones due to this virus, and pray for all who have lost loved ones during this time, and must wait for a memorial service to honor their beloved.

• Pray for those facing financial hardships, layoffs, and uncertainty about the future of their jobs and how they will pay their bills

• Pray for those for whom isolation can be devastating and even dangerous – those needing support groups like Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous, and others

• Pray for the families with members who are hospitalized or in facilities, and cannot see each other during this time

• Pray for those who have had medical procedures and appointments postponed which affect their health

• Pray for children as they adjust to a new reality, and what that means for their learning, socializing and impact on their home life

• Pray for our church staff and leaders, and for all of us, that we can find ways to stay connected and care for each other through this time of “social distancing.”

• Pray for patience in our daily living – that we would work together as human beings, with tolerance, understanding and perseverance

• Pray that good will come out this – that there would be more humility, more gratitude, more understanding of what is important in life, more awareness of God

• Pray that we, as Christians, will be a beacon of hope and love and light to those in need. And that we would have faith and trust in Almighty God to get us through.

Prayers from the New England Annual Conference leaders

Ever present God,
we find ourselves awakened to a new reality –
 our daily routines disrupted
 our loved ones at risk
 our health in jeopardy
 our faith tested.

we find ourselves
 cut off from family and friends
 restricted in our mobility
 missing the services we have taken for granted
 living with anxiety and unanswered questions.

we find ourselves
 touched by a virus that is crossing all boundaries
 sharing a fight for life with people we do not know
 staying connected by love and fear
 praying for the common good which is our good

we find ourselves
 frustrated
 critical,
 looking to blame
 wanting a quick fix

Ever loving God we thank you
 for Jesus who did the messy work of loving
 who made mud from saliva and dirt
 spread it on a blind man's eyes and healed his sight

we thank you
 for public officials and health professionals,
 researchers, neighbors, caregivers,
 and all who embody your love in the midst of this crisis.

Ever merciful God,
 Keep us in your love.
 Help us to see what is ours to do.
 Give us courage and calm.
 Gather us into one
 and lead us through these challenging days.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

By Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar
Scripture: John 9:1-41

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Our minds are consumed by a virus that threatens our bodies

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Our band-width is stretched thin as we try to gain control

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Our minds are filled with fear about how we will pay the bills

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Our brains are tired of seeking answers to unknown scientific solutions

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Our attention is devoted to 24-hour news cycles while our families still need us to see them

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Our minds are overcome with worry about how bad things may get

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Melt our fear
Mold our faith
Fill us with hope
Use us to share the good news that you are the source of life and peace.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Draw our attention to new life budding in the trees and flowers outside our windows

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Focus our minds on gratitude for breath that sustains us

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Set our thoughts on what is pleasing and good

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Cultivate our creativity to find new ways to connect with our community

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
Make space in our brains for meditation on your presence in us

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
May it be so

By Rev. Erica Robinson-Johnson, Director of Connectional Ministries/Assistant to the Bishop, With phrases borrowed from "Spirit of the Living God" by Daniel Iverson (UM Hymnal No 393) Scripture: Romans 8:6 "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

*O Breath of Life, come sweeping through us,
revive us now with life and power.
O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us,
and fit us now to meet this hour.*

O Breath of Life,
Where there is despair, let there be hope.
Where there is sorrow, let there be solace.
Where there is grief, let there be faith.
Where there is brokenness, let there be healing.

*O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need.
Then in your tenderness, remake us;
revive, restore, for this we plead.*

O Wind of God,
Where there is hardship, let there be comfort.
Where there is blaming, let there be forgiveness.
Where there is worry, let there be peace.
Where there is loneliness, let there be connection.

*O Breath of Love, come breathe within us,
renewing thought and will of heart.
Come, love of Christ, afresh assure us,
revive our faith in every part.*

O Breath of Love,
Where there is panic, let there be calm.
Where there is leadership, let there be wisdom.
Where there is healthcare, let there be fortitude.
Where there is research, let there be breakthrough.

Holy Spirit, breathe into our trembling and troubled souls the assurance of your presence so we may remain a people of faith, hope and love.
Amen.

By Rene Wilbur, New England Conference Lay Leader
Hymn adaptation from "O Breath of Life" by Bessie Porter Head (Lyrics) and David Ashley White (Music). (UM Hymnal No. 543) Scripture: Ezekiel 37:5b – "I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live."

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

- Pray the Lord's prayer. Pause after each line and turn it into your personal prayer.
Our Father who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen
- Pray a Breath Prayer, which is a short prayer that you can repeat at times throughout the day. Imagine God asking you, "What do you most want?" Answer God honestly with whatever word or phrase come from deep within you. Choose your favorite or most natural name for God. Combine the two to make your own breath prayer. Breathe slowly and deeply, repeating the first half of the prayer as you inhale and the second half as you exhale.
 - **Let me know your peace, O God.**
 - **Touch me, heal me, O Great Physician**
 - **Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**
 - **Light of the World, illumine my way.**
 - **Be with me O God, let me not be afraid.**
- ACTS Prayer:
 - **Adoration** – Focus on the greatness, love, mercy, care and power of God
 - **Confession** – Bring before God your fears and failures, your misguided thoughts and attitudes, and trust in God's forgiveness
 - **Thanksgiving** – Express gratitude for God's gifts and blessings (even list them), for God's presence and strength, for the gift of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit
 - **Supplication** – Ask God to help those you love, to help guide your decisions, to be with those in need
- Use Psalms as the basis for prayers, such as Psalms 1, 8, 15, and 19, among others.
- Hymns – Take one of your favorite hymns and make it your prayer
- Scripture – Read a passage of scripture, meditate on it, and pray in response to it. For example, the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12), story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42), the storm at sea (Mark 4:35-41) or any parable, or any of Jesus' miracles.

PRAYERS OF OTHERS

John Wesley United Methodist Church Prayer

Dear Lord, we want John Wesley to be a strong and vital church in our community. And we want to be guided by your vision and plan for us. As we move into the future, please lead us all in our thoughts, our discussions, and our decisions. Show us what you would have us do and how you would have us do it. And help us always remember that John Wesley is your church, not ours – may your will be done. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee;
let me be full, let me be empty;
let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

A Prayer from Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas

Give us, O Lord, steadfast hearts, which no unworthy thought can drag downward, unconquered hearts, which no tribulation can wear out, upright hearts, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

Prayer of a Confederate Soldier

I asked God 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 great 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 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 that I asked for—but everything that I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

The Serenity Prayer – by Reinhold Niebuhr

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can; And wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as he did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that he will make all things right if I surrender to his will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with him forever in the next.

Prayer of Confession

Glorious God, Your thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are your ways our ways.

You look at the ugliest soul and see, still unstirred, the wings of an angel.

We scan the finest of our neighbors, anxious to find the flaws.

You see our lives in the context of eternity, and make a time for waiting, for yearning, for putting things in proportion.

We demand instant results; and look for tomorrow before savoring today.

You know that only one who suffers can ultimately save, so you choose to walk the way of the cross.

We feel judged and threatened by that love which risks all for all.

Your thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are your ways our ways.

Not to have our worst confirmed, but to have our best liberated,
we pray for your grace and your pardon.

Forgive in us what has gone wrong, repair in us what is wasted, reveal in us what is good.

And nourish us with better food than we could ever purchase:

Your word, your love, your interest, your bread for our life's journey,

In the company of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(A Wee Worship Book by the Wild Goose Worship Group, Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1999, pp. 44-45)

Morning Prayer

Everywhere I walk let it be on Your path.

Everything I see let it be through Your eyes.

Everything I do let it be Your will.

Every hardship I face let me place it in Your hands.

Every emotion I feel let it be Your spirit moving in me.

Everything I seek let me find it in Your love.

My Dear God, I thank You for this day.

I ask not to know where I am going.

I ask only to know and feel in the depths of my heart and soul that You are with me that You are guiding me that I am safe in the protection of Your loving care.

In Jesus name I offer myself to You. Amen.

A Prayer for the Church

O gracious God, we pray for your holy Church universal,
that you would be pleased to fill it with all truth, in all peace.

Where it is corrupt, purify it;

where it is in error, direct it;

where in any thing it is amiss, reform it;

where it is right, establish it;

where it is in want, provide for it;

where it is divided, reunite it;

for the sake of him, who died and rose again,

and ever lives to make intercession for us,

Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer, U.S.A., 20th Cent. Alt.)

Prayer of St. Patrick

"As I arise today, may the strength of God pilot me, the power of God uphold me, the wisdom of God guide me.
May the eye of God look before me, the ear of God hear me, the word of God speak for me.
May the hand of God protect me, the way of God lie before me, the shield of God defend me, the host of God save me.
May Christ shield me today.
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit, Christ when I stand,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me. Amen."

Thank you in all circumstances - Cindy McMEnamin

"Thank you, God for the times You have said "no." It reminds me that You know what's best for me, even when my opinion differs from Yours.
Thank You, Lord, for the things you have withheld from me. You have protected me from what I may never realize.
Thank You, God, for the doors You have closed. They have prevented me from going where You did not want me to go.
Thank you, Lord, for the physical pain You've allowed in my life. It has helped me more closely relate to Your sufferings on my behalf.
Thank you, Lord, for the alone times in my life. Those times have forced me to lean in closer to You.
Thank you, God, for the uncertainties I've experienced. They have deepened my trust in You.
Thank You, Lord, for the times You came through for me when I didn't even know I needed a rescue.
Thank You, Lord, for the losses I have experienced. They have been a reminder that You are my greatest gain.
Thank You, God, for the times I haven't been able to control my circumstances. They have reminded me that You are sovereign and on the throne.
Thank You, God, for the great gift of your forgiveness through Your perfect Son's death on the cross on my sins.
Thank You, Father, that You know me, You hear me, and You see my tears. Remind me through difficult times that You are God, You are on the throne, and You are eternally good.
And thank You, Lord, not only for my eternal salvation, but for the salvation You afford every day of my life as You save me from myself, my own limited insights, and my frailties, as I strive to walk in the light of Your power and strength and love."

A Prayer for our Country

O Lord, look graciously upon this land. Where it is in pride, subdue it. Where it is in need, supply it. Where it is in error, rectify it. Where it is in default, restore it. And where it holds to that which is just and compassionate, support it. Amen. (Church of Pakistan, 20th cent.)

Prayer for any time

Oh God, enlighten my mind with truth,
Inflame my heart with love,
Inspire my will with courage,
Enrich my life with service,
Pardon what I have been,
Sanctify what I am,
Order what I shall be,
And thine shall be the glory,
And mine the eternal salvation,
Through Jesus Christ my Lord.
Amen.

Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits and blessings, which thou has given to me,
for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful Friend, Brother and Redeemer,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus Christ. Matthew 6:9-13

CHILDREN'S PRAYERS

A Mealtime Prayer

God is great and God is good,
And we thank God for our food;
By God's hand we must be fed,
Give us Lord, our daily bread.
Amen.

Before I Run to Play

Now, before I run to play,
Let me not forget to pray
To God who kept me through the night
And waked me with the morning light.
Help me, Lord, to love thee more
Than I ever loved before,
In my work and in my play
Be thou with me through the day.

Another Mealtime Prayer

We thank Thee Lord, for happy hearts,
For rain and sunny weather.
We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,
And that we are together.
Amen.

A Prayer for Protection

God in heaven hear my prayer,
Keep me in thy loving care.
Be my guide in all I do,
Bless all those who love me too.
Amen.