



Community Prayer Room Guide

STAND AT THE CROSSROADS



BLESSING & GROWING
JULY 2021

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WELCOME

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Matthew 18:19-20

Dear church family,

This month's prayer focus is "Blessing and Growing"— for our children, youth, & families; and how Community Church can come alongside our families in the collaborative effort of discipling young people.

But we must make one thing abundantly clear! This prayer focus is not ONLY for our families with young children. It is also for us as a church family. Like a biological family unit, a church family functions in much the same way. In 1 Timothy 3: 15, the apostle Paul refers to "the household of God, which is the church of the living God." The church family never replaces the nuclear family. Instead, the church family helps to reorient our family relationships.

The reflections from this month's prayer guide are largely taken from a wonderful book called, "Belonging and Becoming: Creating a Thriving Family Culture" by Mark and Lisa Scandrette. In the book, the Scandrettes use this beautiful image of Redwood trees to draw out some comparisons to family life:

Trees and families have many similarities. It's not surprising that we often refer to our ancestors and ourselves as parts of a family tree, because trees are a symbol of life, rooted and unfolding through generations. Redwood trees grow in circles, called faerie rings, as the shoots of new trees sprout up rapidly around a dying parent plant. The details of how redwoods grow provide a helpful image for what our human families need to thrive (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 25).

As we read, pray, and reflect on the themes of the days ahead, let us be mindful of how all of it speaks to our lives as a part of a family—whatever that might look like—and also as a part of the family of God. It is as the old hymn says,

*You will notice we say "brother and sister" 'round here,
It's because we're a family and these are so near;
When one has a heartache, we all share the tears,
And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear.
I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God!*

God bless,
The Christian Formation Team

Thursday, July 8, 2021

LIVING FROM A VISION

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 46 | Matthew 11:25-30 | Hebrews 4:9-12

REFLECTION

Redwood trees require access to energy beyond themselves. They stretch out their branches to receive the nourishment of coastal fog, sunlight, and rain. To thrive, human families need to develop receptivity to the light, energy, and love of the Creator, discovering how we're connected to God's larger story. What kind of world is this? Who are we? Why are we here? Families can cultivate awakening to God's care and the larger story we are all part of by embracing life-giving spiritual practices and making conscious ethical choices (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 25).

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for members of our families to help each other feel welcome and connected, and take steps to build trust.
- Praise God and thank Him for the gift of families.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Chad, Sinthi, Andrew, and Sam Acey; Erik Alsgaard and Sheila George; Don and Lois Amos; Ginny Andrews and Gary Todd; Janet Armstrong; Ukiah, Brandi, Aubrey, Delaney, and MaKialey Austin; Todd and Karen Bailey; Marsha Baker and Matt Perry; Carol Barbour; Marc, Cathay, Alex, Aaron, and Adam Barclay; Monika Barilla; Melissa Benda; David, Janice, Robert, Ryan, and Sarah Berry; Sara Blight; Valerie and Jerry Boarman; Michael and Andrew Bogdan; Lynn Bogovich and Diana Gumas; Ron and Rita Boller; Mike and Martha Brewer; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.

- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus said, "Put on my yoke, and learn from me, I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves." - Matthew 11:29

Walk with me, Jesus, walk with me.
 The way isn't always easy, you see.
 But your love, it reaches up to the sky,
 And carries me, so that I can try.
 The way isn't always easy, you see.
 Walk with me, Jesus, walk with me. Amen

(Common Prayer for Children and Families by Jenifer Gamber & Timothy J.S. Seamans)

PRACTICES

- Draw and talk. Bring out paper and crayons. Have each person draw a family portrait or a picture of you all doing something you enjoy. Then take turns describing your pictures to each other. What do you like about your family? How does your family help you? How does your family help others?
- Take a trip down memory lane. Look through family photos together, talking about the memories they bring up. What are some of your best memories as a family? What do you value about your family? How has your family helped each other grow?
- Write a letter, post a note or tell someone in your family that you are thankful for him/her.

Friday, July 9, 2021

LIVING FROM A VISION

...Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master. (The Message)
Ephesians 6:4

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Proverbs 8:32-35 | Mark 6:30-32 | Ephesians 6:1-4

REFLECTION

If our inherited ways of thinking, behaving, and relating are wearing us out and making our lives fragmented, Jesus offers a radical, integral alternative. What would our lives look like if we let them be shaped more by this vision than by the values and priorities of a hurried and fragmented culture? St. Paul suggested that a parent's true job is to "take [their children] by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master." That's a refreshing view of success: helping each other live in the freedom and lightness that Jesus modeled and taught. Perhaps the highest aspiration a family can have is to help one another discover the whole and integrated lives we were created for (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 15).

An African proverb, "If you want to travel fast, go alone. If you want to travel far, go together."

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to value their family strengths, and help each other identify growth areas.
- We pray for the path to follow Jesus and not the ways of a hurried and fragmented culture.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Nicole, Philippe, Sophie, and Dominic Bouvier; Gladys Boyd; George and Christine Brungot; Terri, Ryan, Destiny, Chayann, Autumn, and TJ Bryant; Sam, Dana, Austin, Cooper, and Evan Buckwalter; Brian, Jennifer, and Bradley Butterworth; JaCina Stanton-Buttrom; Audrey Caldwell; Fran Cannetti; Robert and Clare Carhart; Erica Cartwright; Teresa and Daniel Cettin; Ross Cheetham; Jennifer Chisari; Ernie Clayton; Andrew, Nicole, Mackenzie, and Patrick Clements; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.

- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious Father, give me diligence to seek You, and wisdom to find You today. May my ears hear Your voice; my eyes see Your goodness; and my tongue proclaim Your name as I commit my life to pleasing You. (Adapted from a prayer by Benedict of Nursia)

PRACTICES

- Play a game. Play a version of hot-and-cold. Ask each person to think of an object in your home that reminds them of one good thing about your family. Have each person lead you to the object by giving clues about who is closer ("hotter") or farther away ("colder"). Why did that object remind you of your family?
- Incorporate the opening prayer in this guide as a part of your family rhythms. Maybe it is your dinner-time prayer. Maybe it is a prayer before bed. Do it often and do it regularly.
- Think about having a day once a week/month where everyone in your family "unplugs" and spends time with each other.

Saturday, July 10, 2021

CARRYING OUT A PURPOSE

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1:27

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1:26-31 | Psalm 90 | Jeremiah 29:11-13

REFLECTION

Have you ever been a part of a group that can't decide where to go or what to do? It can be very frustrating. Having a clear purpose becomes crucial when two or more people travel together (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 47).

Redwood trees know what their purpose is; it's encoded in their DNA. One dramatic difference between trees and people is that human families must make conscious choices to embrace a shared purpose. A thriving family knows what it's about. Our families can live from a deep sense of purpose and a positive vision of the future that we can articulate and use as a guide for decision making (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 27).

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to have a vision for their purpose together.
- We pray that God will give us wisdom of heart to embrace a shared purpose.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Jacob, Jaymie, William, and Benjamin Coffelt; Jim Cole; Cheryl, Ryan, Joanna, and Benjamin Cook; Linda Crandall; Margaret Cullings; Danny and Elynor Dalton; LaDonna Daniels; Bryan, Heather, Jackson, Benjamin, and Nathan Deehring; Joe, Meagan, Maddie, and Amelia DeSilva; Dianne Dezio; John and Dale Dodd; Scott, Amy, Fletcher, and Amelia Doty; Paul Doughty; Karen Drabczyk; Mike, Cindy, Ryan, and Lindsey Drabick; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.

- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

God, our treasury of blessings, come live with us at our home. Bless us and guide us in your ways. Widen our hearts to welcome others. Bind our hearts together so that Christ's presence is revealed by our love. Amen

(Common Prayer for Children and Families by Jenifer Gamber & Timothy J.S. Seamans)

PRACTICES

- Let's play family. Use your family's stuffed animals or action figures to play, pretend and talk about family purposes. Have each person pick a toy and offer some prompts, such as: Who's the mom, and what does mom do in the family? Who's the dad, and what does the dad do in the family? Who else is in the family, and what do they do? What's the family doing? Where are they going?
- Go on an adventure. Choose a fun destination nearby. Invite your children to decide what route you'll take to get there. Then invite the family to brainstorm about that adventure. What's important to your family? How do you live that out? How do you want others to feel or know about your family?

Sunday, July 11, 2021

FINDING A RHYTHM

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
Deuteronomy 6:5-7

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 | Psalm 131 | Luke 13:6-9 | 1 Timothy 4:7-11

REFLECTION

Redwood trees grow with the rhythms and cycles of life. If you cut open a redwood, you'll discover tree rings, a record of time and seasons. Thriving families are rooted in healthy rhythms for living well together in time. Your family can enact household rhythms and policies that are life-giving and that support your family's shared purpose (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 26)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to celebrate life-giving rhythms, and consider the tradeoffs that must be made to prioritize life-giving rhythms.
- We pray for courage to love God with all our hearts, soul and strength through all the distractions.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Andy and Vicki Duane; Kyle and Wendy Dunn; Diane Eager; Barry and Janet Elm; Arnie, Justin, and Nico Espartero; Manuel and Corazon Espartero; Charlie and July Eyet; Kathleen Fagan; Ben, Kate, Kallan and Solomon Falls; Leslie Farrow; Russ and Sandra Flowers; Kevin Flowers; Annabel Fogleman; Ryan Fregger; Diana, Holly, and Carol Fries; Pam Ganis; and Bill and Cindy Garmoe; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.
- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Sabbath Blessing

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home. May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-stored. May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down. May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness. May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and in the life to come.

PRACTICES

- Establish or renew a family rhythm. Take steps together to enact it.
- Set boundaries and limits on screen time. Allow time to just be together, without distraction.
- Have a time during the day, possibly dinner time, to ask family members two questions: 1) What was your favorite part of the day? 2) Did anything make you sad today? Then give thanks and pray for the things you talked about.

Monday, July 12, 2021

FINDING A RHYTHM

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

Mark 1:35

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

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SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 23 | Colossians 3:1-17 | Mark 1:21-35

REFLECTION

Talking about your family's purpose and identifying shared rhythms can be exciting. But perhaps, like us, you've discovered that the hardest part is following through on those good intentions. One couple confessed, "We can come up with a great vision and plan, and we forget about it in, like, five minutes--or we'll start a new rhythm that only lasts for two days." The competing demands of family life can make it difficult to follow through and stay on track with the purpose and priorities you've identified. Having a regular venue for checking in on goals and making decisions can help you keep to your life-giving rhythms. (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 67)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to have the intentionality required to live into life-giving rhythms and a shared purpose.
- We pray for strength to be able to stay on track amid competing demands and the courage to change our rhythms if they are no longer working for our family.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Patricia Gibson; Kathryn Gilbert; Hilary Ann Golden; Mike and Nancy Gorman; Glen Greening; Teri, Tim, Emma, and Peter Gregory; Erica, William, and Darci Griffin; Clark Griffith; Norma Guynn; Cheryl, Kevin, Chase, and Connor Hamlin; Roger Hansen; Clifford and Helen Hartmann; Alex, Kara, and Braden Heathcote; Jim and Trish Heathcote; Betsy and Kelsey Hebron; and Steve, Laticia, Holt, Aubrianna, and Gavin Hendershot, and those who are ever-present in our hearts.
- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.

- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
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THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, teach us how to dance
to the rhythm of your wisdom;
show us how to laugh
with the insights of your truth,
so that we can live for the praise of your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

~ from a collection of prayers posted on the **Worship@North**

PRACTICES

- Think of family rhythms that may be seasonal - for example: vacations - go camping, stay at a cabin in the mountains, explore a new city together, hike in your neighbor or county parks.
- Families are enriched by finding ways to serve together in their community. You may consider visiting an elderly neighbor, volunteering at a food/baby pantry or helping with a park/church cleanup project.
- Think about reaching out to extended family members and discuss with your children/grandchildren the appreciation of family heritage.

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

DISCOVERING A COMMON STORY

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

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Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 29 | John 3:1-21 | Luke 15:11-32

REFLECTION

In the best stories, the characters are on a quest. They have an important task to accomplish. It may be finding love or a buried treasure or saving the world. They cause us to ask, why are we here? What is the plot of the story we find ourselves in? And in the words of Wendell Berry, "What are people for?" We were made for relationship with God, the One in whom "we live and move and have our being." We know and love God by learning to love and care for one another (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 91).

A thriving family cultivates awakening to God's care and the larger story we're all part of by embracing life-giving spiritual practices and making conscious ethical choices (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 83).

Who are your heroes and people you most admire? Why? Talk about your own faith journey; the stories that have shaped you throughout your life. Read the stories of Scripture together. Explore together what larger story your family is a part of and embrace life-giving spiritual practices (reading Scripture, prayer, Sabbath rest, etc....) as a family.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to practice having spiritual conversations and experiences together.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Joan Stanley and Jack Herbert; Dave and Laurie High; Mary Beth, John, Lydia, and Jack Holly; Jane Hunt; Jason, Pam, Lily, Erick, and Mitch Iddings; Donny James; EK James; Jennifer Jamieson; Pey-Schuan, Allison, Gelsey, and Dyson Jian; Jane Johnson; Izola Jones; Barb Julian; Bonnie, Jada, and Caleb

Kegan; Audrey Kerge; Brenda Kidwell; Marty Kluh; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.

- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

God, we bring our stories to this place and we wait to be held by yours. We bring our faithfulness: **shape it with grace.** We bring our success: **shape it with generosity.** We bring our weaknesses: **shape them with compassion.** We bring our possibilities: **shape them with hope.** We confess, God, that the way is hard and we are tired. **Speak into our tiredness with your story of grace.** We confess that the way is unclear and we do not know the path. **Speak into our wandering with your story of vision.** We confess that we are tired of waiting and we just want to make it happen. **Speak into our impatience with your story of wisdom.** Let your story be our story and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

– written by Cheryl Lawrie

PRACTICES

- Read and discuss passages of Scripture.
- Read a story or picture Bible together.
- Draw or act out a story from Scripture.
- Attend worship together as a family.
- Share your story of spiritual journey with your kids.

Wednesday, July 14, 2021

FOSTERING CONNECTION

Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor...
Romans 12:10

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

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SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 105:1-6, 23-26, 43-45 | Romans 12:9-21 | Matthew 16:21-28

REFLECTION

Redwood trees grow together in circles connected by interlocking roots that protect them from high winds. The roots are shallow, so their strength comes from strong links with one another. Similarly, thriving families find ways to foster belonging and care, and they support one another through life's storms. Your family can develop skills to relate with love and respect and pursue healthy ways to connect, communicate, navigate conflicts and have fun (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 26)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to create a culture of love and respect in their home.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Chris, Jodi, Max, Sadie, and Rex Kollias; Nancy Kripner and Jennie Higgs; Mary Kurfess and John Scaggs; Barbara Langdon; Dave Lanzer, Emily, and Brayden St. Louis; Don Larson; Pam LaRue; Jim, Melanie, and Allie Lawrence; Robin, Lawrence, and Josh Lee; Randall Lefler; Mikki, Jim, and Katie Loiselle; Joanne MacMillan; Michael, Stephanie, Eloise, Madeline, and Jackson Marlow; Jason, Nicole, Grant and Wade Mathison; Joyce Matney; Lenora McClain; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.
- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
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- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

*"And all the believers met together constantly,
and shared everything they had...." Acts 2:44*

May the God who is community be with us as we seek to be a community. May God bless our dreams and may God shatter our dreams. May God help us to be real and to find depth in weakness and brokenness. May God help us to face and grow through conflict rather than pretend by being nice. May we look at each other through soft eyes and truly respect each other as human beings. May God help us let go of control and the need to fix one another. May God help us discover we are needy in our own souls and give attention to our own hearts. May God grant us the gift of an extraordinary love that flows from the heart of god that covers a multitude of wrongs. Amen.

~ written by Anna on <http://www.freshworship.org/>

PRACTICES

- Explore your ground rules. It can help to revisit family ground rules and the logic behind them at different stages of family life. How do you want to treat each other? What behaviors do we need to say yes to and what do we need to say not to in order to treat each other with love and respect?
- Cheer each other on. Giving hugs and regularly saying, "I love you" is a great way to help family members feel safe, cared for and loved.

Thursday, July 15, 2021

FOSTERING CONNECTION

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 98 | Galatians 6:2 | John 15:12-15

REFLECTION

From the book *Braving the Wilderness* by Brene Brown she talks about "True belonging. I don't know exactly what it is about the combination of those two words, but I do know that when I say it aloud, it just feels right. It feels like something that we all crave and need in our lives (no matter our age). We want to be a part of something, but we need it to be real--not conditional or fake or constantly up for negotiation. We need true belonging--but what exactly is it?"

Are you fostering connections with others? Do you feel a true belonging? "Stop walking through the world looking for confirmation that you don't belong. You will always find it because you've made that your mission. Stop scouring people's faces for evidence that you're not enough. You will always find it because you've made that your goal. True belonging and self-worth are not goods. We don't negotiate their value with the world. The truth about who we are lives in our hearts. Our call to courage is to protect our wild heart against constant evaluation, especially our own. No one belongs here more than YOU." -- Brene Brown #bravingthewilderness.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to build and reinforce skills for working through conflicts.
- We pray for our families to share and celebrate the ways they build connections, have fun and offer hospitality to others.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Brian, Joy, and Georgia McCrady; Marilyn McKee; Art and Vickie McQuade; Laurice Medley; Candis, Otho,

Marcus, and Malik Milbourne; Carole Mills; Donna Mitchell; Helen Mitchell; Sherri Mitchell; Matt, Rachelle, McKenzie, and MJ Monroe; Kathy Monte; Charlie and Carol Moore; Sharon Munns; Penny and Molly Murnane; Susan Myers; Marge Naccari; James and Barbara Nalley; Joyce Obear; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.

- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Great God who calls us to belonging, Who delights in curiosity, invention, ingenuity. Praise be for minds that bend and flex despite restriction, for bodies that signal love by staying apart. Praise be for neighbours talking across fences, calling from balconies, waving through windows, for greetings that cross the space between us. Praise be for strangers, careful on footpaths, for children asking their questions, for truth tellers who earn our trust and speak to our fear. Praise be for friends who warn and chide and encourage, for human warmth in time of distance. Praise be. Amen.

~ written by Julie Perrin

PRACTICES

- Speak affirmations. Amid the pressures and demands of life, encouraging words can bring energy and hope.
- Share highs and lows. You can create a culture of warmth by celebrating good news together and supporting each other through difficulties.

Friday, July 16, 2021

NURTURING GROWTH

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 139 | 2 Peter 3:18 | John 15:1-17

REFLECTION

Redwood trees are resilient to threats and responsive to opportunities to grow. Their bark, which is highly tannic and fire-resistant, protects them from danger. For giant sequoias, a close relative to the redwood, fire is essential to their reproduction, releasing the seeds from which new life can grow. Similarly, thriving families are committed to helping one another develop and embrace the challenges and stages of life as opportunities for growth and change. Our families can embrace each person's belovedness, hold one another's brokenness, and support one another in responding to the invitation to grow and change (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 26).

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to provide compassionate and constructive space to talk about personal growth edges.
- We pray for our families to encourage and affirm honesty about blessedness and brokenness in ourselves, in our families and in our world.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: John Park; Emily, Josh, Evelyn, and Henry Parsons; Margaret Passalacqua; Sharad and Jyoti Patel; Lisa Penix; Gina Perantoni and Doug Sauer; Ericka Perry-Junior; Keith and Margaret Phillips; Sharon Piedtrowski; Rena and Don Pogue; Kathy Powers; Matt, Sandy, Sam and Eric Ranck; Michelle Rasbeck; Leslye and Ken Reed; Tom Reed; Angel, Bob, and Franky Reif; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.
- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We also pray for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.

- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

God of Grace,
 we come as people who live through that Grace.
**And so we praise you for the growth,
 we rejoice in being set free,
 we dance along the path that leads us home,
 we give thanks for the healing we have received,
 we relax in the knowledge that we are forgiven
 and we live as people of Grace. Amen.**

~ written by Rev Gord

PRACTICES

- Go Nature "Combing." Make a habit (or practice!) of always being on the lookout for natural found objects (pinecones, a pretty leaf, feathers, rocks, acorns) and arranging them on a bookshelf, in a basket, or on your mantle.
- Bring home fresh flowers, whether this be from your own garden, a friend's, or a neglected alley patch, this is a failsafe way to bring the outdoors in year round, and to remind you of the natural process of growth.

Saturday, July 17, 2021

CELEBRATING ABUNDANCE

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 1 | Ephesians 3:14-21 | Luke 12:22-34

REFLECTION

Redwood trees are a fruitful part of a larger living system. With their branches, they efficiently collect water from passing fog, and they absorb nutrients from the surrounding soil. They take only what they need to be sustained and also give back to the forest. Their fallen leaves provide nourishment to forest creatures, and their canopy creates a habitat for other plants, birds, insects and animals. Thriving families learn to see themselves as part of a larger economy of abundance and interdependence. Our families can live abundantly by using resources wisely and practicing gratitude, trust, contentment, and generosity (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 26).

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to share best practices in training kids to handle money and possessions.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Janet and Marvin Riggs; Larry and Barbara Rogers; Chris and Genevieve Rowland; Beth Ryan; Dave and Margie Sabol; Suzanne Sankey; Janice Schaeffer; Jack and Gail Schulz; Terry Shields; Bev Shively; Robin Shobe; Robert Simpkins; Connor Skalitzky; Peggy Smith; John and Eileen Snowden; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.
- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We pray also for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.

- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.
- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

God of love,
 you abide with us;
 you provide for all our needs
 and guide us in your ways.
 Out of gratitude for your care,
 we bring our gifts before you.
 Use them for your work of caring,
 that all may feast at the table of abundance,
 walk without fear,
 and drink deeply
 from the cup of compassion. Amen.
 ~ written by Mary Petrina Boyd

PRACTICES

- Practice gratitude. Go around the table and share one thing you are grateful for from today. Keep a family gratitude log and post it where you'll see it regularly to be reminded of the abundant ways God cares for you.
- Express contentment. Declutter your home together. Help your kids make decisions about their stuff. Be selective about your gifts.

Sunday, July 18, 2021

SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVITY

Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us...
Hebrews 12:1

SILENCE, STILLNESS, CENTERING

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to recenter my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Gracious God, make our families places of belonging and becoming: one in purpose, together in rhythm, united by a common story. Help us connect with love and respect, growing in wisdom, living abundantly and productively seeking the greater good, so that our families and every family on earth can thrive. In Jesus' name, amen. (Prayer for Family Thriving)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 101 | Hebrews 12:1-3 | Matthew 7:24-29

REFLECTION

Redwood trees are constantly investing in the future. New seedlings often sprout from burls or roots at the base of a parent plant or fallen tree. One tree can produce six million seeds in a single year. A thriving family celebrates each person's uniqueness and supports the development of skills and capacities to serve others and pursue the greater good. Our families can flourish by learning to engage the needs and opportunities of our world (Belonging and Becoming, pg. 27).

PRAYER PROMPTS

- We pray for our families to be places where all learn to participate in the work of the world.
- We pray for our families to celebrate the journey they've been on together.
- We pray for our church family and those who have been guests among us: Mary Stanton; Lanie and Scott Stargel; Vera Stewart; Doug and Angela Stiegler; Carol and Bailey Streeter, and Jack Schuette; Lou Sullivan; Ephraim, Brenda, Ethan, and Elisha Sydney; Jason and Hailey Titcomb; Brian and Laurie Thorne; Mary and Eugene Trautman; Barbara Truntich; Guy and Sara Turner; Erin and Mike Visitacion; Heather, James, and Aniela Vorhies; Tracy and Frank Weber; Bill and Melanie Wesley; Bo White; Karl, Jennifer, Andrew, and Josh Wick; Rusty Wilbur; Chris and Kim Wilhelm; Mike Wilhelm; Millie Wilson; and those who are ever-present in our hearts.
- We pray for LaTrelle, our Bishop; Sarah, our District Superintendent; Erik, our pastor; and for all bishops, superintendents, and pastors; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments. We pray also for our sister church, Wilson Memorial UMC.
- We pray for Joseph, our President; the Congress and Supreme Court of the United States; for Larry, our governor; and Steuart, our county executive; and for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world; that there may be justice and peace on the earth.

- We pray for this community of Crofton, the nation, and the world; for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Spirit, work in us, and through us to glorify yourself.
Cleanse us and mold us into the people that you want us to be.

We lay our lives down before you, God.

Not our will, God. Your will!

We offer ourselves as living sacrifices to you, God.

Burn us up in your refiner's fire
so that all that's left is your righteousness.

Let us operate in the fruits of your Spirit, God:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control—we want it all.

These are the defining characteristics of who you are, Jesus,

and if we want people to see you in us,
we need these characteristics to define us as well.

Make it so, Holy Spirit. Move in us.

Clear out the junk in our hearts that is preventing us from being fruitful.

All we want is you, Jesus.

You are our all in all.

~ written by Jonathan, and posted on **Given Life**. <http://www.givenlife.com>

PRACTICES

- Brainstorm a list of needs in your local community. What is a next step your family can take to engage with this need?

August 12-22, 2021

DEEPER INTO LEARNING

*Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
Psalm 25:4*

AUGUST PRAYER ROOM

In August, we will begin a new 3 month Prayer Room Series. August's prayer focus will be on diving "Deeper into Learning"—growing together in faith, knowledge and wisdom. September's prayer focus will be on diving "Deeper into Church"—growing together as the body of Christ. And October's prayer focus will be on diving "Deeper into Community"—growing together in loving our neighbors and neighborhood well.

HOW TO REGISTER

Register now for our July Prayer Room from August 12-22, 2021. You can register for prayer times at cumc.net/prayer-rooms. Instructions for registering are included on the website. Lastly, resources and tools for prayer are available. Before the start date, a prayer guide will be provided.

In addition to the virtual Prayer Room, the church Sanctuary will be open for prayer. Check Realm or the Community Connection newsletter for more details.

We also encourage you to sign up both for individual prayer times AND prayer times with others, whether that happens in-person or virtually. Contact the church office with any questions.

APPENDIX

PRAYER RESOURCES

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Mark 11:24

BOOKS

How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People by Pete Greig

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home by Richard Foster

Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation by Ruth Haley Barton

Common Prayer for Ordinary Radicals by Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

A Guide to Prayer for All God's People by Rueben P. Job, Norman Shawchuck

Day by Day: A 40-Day Journey with the Daily Office by Peter Scazzero

APPS

Lectio 365 Daily Devotional App - <https://www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional>

Pray-as-you-go Podcast & App - <https://pray-as-you-go.org/>

Common Prayer for Ordinary Radicals - <https://commonprayer.net/apps>

WEBSITES

The Upper Room Daily Devotional - <https://www.upperroom.org/devotionals>

The Prayer Toolshed - <https://prayercourse.org/toolshed/>

Forward Movement Day by Day Devotional - <https://prayer.forwardmovement.org/>

VIDEOS

The Prayer Course - <https://prayercourse.org/>

WAYS OF PRAYING

Excerpts taken from The Prayer Course Toolshed resources (<https://prayercourse.org/toolshed/>):

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is the most famous prayer in history, crafted by Jesus himself (Matthew 6:9-13). This prayer given by Jesus can be used in two quite distinct ways: The Lord's Prayer serves as the ultimate prototype. It is a condensed liturgical poem clearly intended for frequent repetition. It teaches us what to pray. The Lord's Prayer guides us as we express the things on our hearts. Each line can be applied and expanded in personal conversation with the Father. It teaches us how to pray.

SIMPLE PRAYER

A quiet time can take many forms, but at its simplest means stopping and pausing to pray with God (Matthew 6:6). Richard Foster says, "In Simple Prayer, we bring ourselves before God just as we are, warts and all...We simply and unpretentiously share our concerns and make our petitions." There is no fixed way to spend time alone with God, but it's helpful to combine Bible reading with prayer and to do so at a regular time each day. There are many excellent devotional resources, but you don't have to use anything at all. It's worth experimenting to see what works best for you.

Use the simple acronym A.C.T.S. to structure your prayer time:

1. **Adoration:** Adoration is an act of praise and worship. Adoring the Lord means offering him the affections of your heart and paying honor to him.
2. **Confession:** In the act of confession you are asking God to remove your old, sinful ways of living. God is faithful and just to forgive sins. Through confession we are made new and more like Jesus.
3. **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for what he has already done in your life and reflect on the many blessings in your life. Thank him for his faithfulness in keeping promises.
4. **Supplication:** Ask the Lord to give you the desires of your heart. Align your heart with His will through reading and praying Scripture. Remind God of his promises to you.

Use the simple acronym P.R.A.Y. to structure your prayer time:

1. **Pause:** sit quietly for a minute, stilling your soul.
2. **Rejoice:** read a short Psalm or listen to a worship song.
3. **Ask:** tell God what's on your heart. Pray through your day. Use a prayer list.
4. **Yield:** read a few verses of Scripture, until a phrase pops out at you and then talk to God about it. Are there any sins you need to confess? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh.
5. **Amen:** Pray the Lord's Prayer.

PRAYING THE PSALMS

The Bible's 150 Psalms can be used to help us pray in many different ways. The most mature and proven way we can learn to worship consistently is to use the Bible's 150 Psalms – the Prayer Book of Jesus – for the purposes that they were originally intended: to train us in a 'conversion of language'

where instead of talking about God, we talk to Him. The Psalms equip us to bring our total selves and truest conditions before God: every emotion 'under the sun' is included in the Psalms, and we can incorporate them into our lives. Learn more at <https://prayercourse.org/toolshed/>.

LECTIO DIVINA

The Lectio Divina is a simple method of praying and meditating on scripture. Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase meaning 'divine reading'. This is a form of meditation on the word of God that trains us to listen to His whisper speaking personally to our hearts, allowing His word to become one with us.

Lectio Divina is described in four main phases:

1. *Lectio*: Read and Listen. Bite into the candy bar.
2. *Meditatio*: Meditate. Explore it. No question is off limits. What did the author mean? How does it make me feel? What does it mean to me?
3. *Oratio*: Pray and respond. A place of intercession and repentance.
4. *Contemplatio*: Rest in God's word. A space of silence, resting in God's presence.

ACTIVE PRAYER

Active prayer includes communicating with God through activity; journaling, gardening, walking, coloring, cycling, jogging or working at routine tasks. Active prayer can also include ways of using the body in prayer, such as the use of body actions when reciting the Lord's Prayer.

SILENT PRAYER

In silent prayer, "we still every motion that is not rooted in God. We become quiet, hushed, motionless, until we are finally centered. We strip away all excess baggage and nonessential trappings until we come into the stark reality of the kingdom of God. We let go of all distractions...We allow God to reshuffle our priorities and eliminate unnecessary froth. The silence of all creaturely activity enables us to hear God" (Richard Foster, *Prayer*). Start with 2 minutes. Add a minute each day, until you can settle into the silence and solitude. Simply let your prayer be a silent being there with God.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

A prayer list helps to develop a deeper, more consistent and therefore more effective prayer life. A prayer list focuses your intention to pray without overwhelming you, allowing you to flow in and out of prayer throughout the day. With a prayer list, when you step back and assess what you are praying for, you realise you're covering quite a lot in prayer. The beauty of a prayer list is also that you get to celebrate the answers to prayer along the way, in both incremental and more dramatic ways you will become more aware of how much God is at work! You also might like to use the 24-7 Prayer app, Inner Room, to create prayer lists for different days; and set reminders on the app to be reminded to pray. Your prayer list can include: your workplace, your to-do list, family, friends, leaders, neighbors, cities, nations, crises. There is no end to the list of things we can pray for!

JOURNALING

Throughout the centuries Christians have written prayers of need, praise and everything in between. From ancient Psalms, to poems on the walls of 24-7 Prayer Rooms, writing has been an aid to prayer for centuries. Many Christians throughout history have used journals to record their prayers. If you find internal or quiet prayer difficult, and prefer conversation and interaction, journaling can be a great way to focus your mind. You can journal your prayers in many different ways: stream of consciousness, a conversation where you write down what you want to say to God and then pause to listen, write a letter, make a list of people or things on your heart, and record things that God has spoken to you as reminders for when you're struggling or need to be reminded of God's faithfulness.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

The Examen is a simple, four step way of reflecting and praying through the day. The Examen is sometimes referred to as 'examination of consciousness' and was popularised by Ignatius of Loyola (1491 - 1556). It has helped millions of Christians centre themselves on Jesus as they come to the end of long and complicated days. This practical way of reviewing the day before you go to sleep affords us the opportunity to become aware of the ways God's presence has been pursuing us while we've been awake. Follow these four simple steps:

1. *Replay* - think over your day like a movie replaying in your head. Notice what you are noticing. What made you happy? What made you anxious? What made you angry?
2. *Rejoice* - thank God for those things which are obvious. But also thank Him for non-obvious things which we sometimes forget - random acts of kindness, being healthy, a positive song or meal. Relish and savour these moments in gratitude to God.
3. *Repent* - say sorry to God for moments that come into your mind as you review the day e.g., getting involved in gossip, reacting with a tone that was aggressive, lacking compassion in a situation, ignoring a need, not responding to a nudge. Receive His forgiveness afresh.
4. *Reboot* - make a decision in your heart to live for Jesus tomorrow and ask for grace to see His presence more clearly.