

Week 1

Missouri Annual Conference 21 Days of Prayer

Missouri Conference of the
United Methodist Church

May 17-23, 2013

Week 1

21 Days of Prayer

Praying Hands & Dirty Fingernails

This 21 Days of Prayer Journal, is designed as a holistic and integrative means to prepare ourselves as clergy and laity, as local churches and as the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church for the holy business of this year's Annual Conference, June 7 – 10, 2013.

Each week there is an article from Bishop Schnase's book "Remember the Future: Praying for the Church and Change." The article is provided for you to read at the start of each week. It sets the tone for the week's spiritual disciplines and guided means of grace. Based upon the weekly focus there are six practices for the week. These practices vary in form and discipline. I strongly encourage you to do one each day as directed. The order is not as important as your doing them. Plan accordingly with your week so that you are doing them with intention and forethought. Having an accountable prayer partner or group is often helpful, so consider sharing this journal with your congregation so they may also be in intentional prayer. We may also consider using them with a small group.

The Great Commandment tells us to love the Lord our God with our full selves; with our mind (intellect), heart (emotions), soul (intuition and divine instinct) and body (physical). We are also to love others as ourselves. These prayer forms are designed to facilitate an experience of grace as you grow more fully in love with God and others. Through the integration of these various forms it is my prayer that we may each first come to a greater understanding of the style of CONTEMPLATIVE ACTION God has uniquely imprinted upon our individual and cumulative lives. Second, I pray that we may have a greater understanding and appreciation of the various prayer forms as they are lived out in the world. May our hands, both praying and serving, be the missional, transformational, kingdom building, peace-making, Christ-like hands at work in the world.

My prayers are with you all as God prepares us for what I believe will be a Spirit-filled Conference.

Rev. Jenn Klein

Weekly Focus and Prayer Forms

Week One: May 17 – 23, 2013

- Article: Praying Hands and Dirty Fingernails
- Focus: Prayer and Service: The integration of piety AND mercy.

Week Two: May 24 – 30, 2013

- Article: The Most Significant Arena
- Focus: Being AND Doing: Missional – through the actions of prayer and service we embody God's mission for the church.

Week Three: May 31 – June 6, 2013

- Article: At the Margins
- Focus: As we embody the lifestyle of prayerful service, or contemplative action, we take it to the margins of the church and live it into the world; meeting engaging, serving, companioning a broken world in Christ-like ways.

Weekly prayer forms include:

- Reading the Article
- Sabbath - honoring Sunday as a day of worshipping God as a community of faith.
- Contemplative Prayer Form – using ancient forms including the Jesus Prayer, Centering and Lectio Divina.
- Walking or Body Prayer Form – guided prayers as you walk and/or pray a space including Prayer Path, Prayer in Community, Prayer Postures
- Art and Soul Prayer Form – using and nurturing our imagination to unleash the creative spirit within through the use of Mandela, Finger Prayers and Prayer Knots.
- Day of Service and Self Examine – serving as an act of prayer and guided reflection
- Fasting – various forms of fasting as a self emptying discipline, with attitudes of trust and dependence upon our ultimate provider, God.

21 Days of Prayer

Week One: May 17 – 23, 2013

- Article: Praying Hands and Dirty Fingernails
- Focus: Prayer and Service: the integration of piety AND mercy.

Weekly prayer forms: Remember to plan ahead and practice one of the following disciplines each day. The order is not as important as the practice. I suggest you read the article each Friday and honor Sabbath on Sunday, then do the remaining disciplines as you are able with your weekly schedule.

Use the following prayer as a daily prayer for the week. Write it on an index card and place it somewhere that you'll see it regularly throughout the week. A possible location (s) might be on a post-it note or index card placed on the bathroom mirror, refrigerator, as a book mark for your Bible or book you are studying, on the dashboard of your car, etc.

Daily Prayer

God, help us love the things you love and want the things you want. Get us walking in your way. Forgive us when we neglect to nourish our relationship with you, and forgive us especially for the ways we shut you out when we close the door to ministries of mercy that reach the last, the least, the lost.ⁱ

1. **Reading the Article:** Praying Hands and Dirty Fingernails, by Robert Schnase. (Need the provided Article from “Remember the Future,” pen and journal)
2. **Sabbath** – Scripture reading and quote for the day. (Need pen and journal)
3. **Contemplative Prayer Form** – Lectio Divina and Prayer Knots (Need twine or rope and scissors, pen and journal).
4. **Walking Prayer** – A guided prayer walk (print out guided prayer focus, pen and journal)
5. **Art and Soul Prayer Form** – 5 Finger Prayer (need paper or journal, and colored markers/pencils)
6. **Day of Service and Self Examine** – (need whatever is necessary for your service activity, pen and journal)
7. **Fasting** – various forms of fasting as a self emptying discipline, with attitudes of trust and dependence upon our ultimate provider, God. (pen and journal)

Praying Hands and Dirty Fingernailsⁱⁱ

John Wesley modeled acts of piety and acts of mercy, and taught that both are essential to our life in Christ. The words piety and mercy sound curiously quaint today, perhaps even stirring negative responses. Piety brings to mind self righteous, sanctimonious arrogance. And no one wants to be at the mercy of anyone else. Mercy connotes weakness, dependence, surrender.

In Wesley's model, acts of piety had to do with the practices of prayer, worship, receiving the sacraments, fasting, and belonging to a society of Christians holding one another accountable for our growth in the knowledge and love of God. Through such practices, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our own growth in grace. By these means we open ourselves to the spiritual life and stay connected to Christ and to one another. Acts of piety convert the heart, turn us daily toward God, and help us receive the life restoring work of God's grace through the Holy Spirit. Acts of piety feed our relationship with God.

Acts of mercy are ministries of compassion, service, and justice that relieve suffering, feed the hungry, visit the imprisoned and heal the sick. These we do in obedience to Christ. We serve others for the purposes of Christ. These are the personal and daily acts of service, kindness, and sacrifice that improve the conditions of life for our neighbors. In wider measure, acts of mercy include our social witness and advocacy, our work for justice and peace, and our support of systems that protect the vulnerable and relieve suffering.

Sometimes we act as if our living in Christ and leading the church require us to emphasize piety to the exclusion of mercy or to choose ministries of mercy at the expense of congregational vitality. This presents an unhealthy and dangerous dichotomy. It forces us to ask ourselves. "Which kind of Christians are we?" Are we those who seek a deeper spirituality in the changed heart that comes through worship, sacraments, prayer, the Scriptures, and fellowship? Or those who pour ourselves out through ministries of service and justice, helping people to rebuild their lives, and offering hope to a hurting world?

Martyn Atkins, general secretary of the British Methodist Church, says, "Acts of piety and acts of mercy are like two wings of a bird; without either one, we cannot fly." There is no simple dualism. We can't evangelize hungry people without giving them food, and offering food alone never completes the task God gives us. Atkins goes on to say, "Following Christ involves praying hands and dirty fingernails."ⁱⁱⁱ

The Call to Action focuses on increasing the number of vital congregations. Some view this as an abandonment of social witness and ministries of mercy. However, the Call of Action's description of vital congregations includes not only a focus on the means by which people grow

in Christ together but also an emphasis on ministries that reach into the community and world to serve in Christ's name. We cannot separate the two. These feed each other. Every faithful and fruitful congregation practices both acts of piety and acts of mercy.

Theoretically, all United Methodists know this. But place a mix of us in a convention center for conference or put us together on a church council, and watch how we feed the false dichotomy. Social justice advocates decry and emphasize on congregations, viewing such a priority as unfaithful and as deadening to our service to a hurting world. Focusing on congregations sounds self-serving, inward-focused, and based on values derived from a success-oriented culture. And those who emphasize starting and strengthening congregations answer that without vital faith communities to reach new people and deepen the spiritual life, there will be no foundation for social witness in the future. We can do better. We cannot allow our calling to serve the world to justify an unwillingness to focus on deepening the spiritual life and witness of our congregations. And we cannot allow our calling to build up the body of Christ to blind us to God's demand for justice, peace, and healing.

Wesley had a profound interest in cultivating the spiritual life as well as feeding the hungry, serving the poor, and visiting the imprisoned. He wrote the sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation" as well as "The Primitive Physick," a book of medical remedies to improve physical health. He wrote prayers, prescribed sacraments, and published sermons to strengthen souls while also speaking against slavery to change society. He saw no contradiction between the care of souls and the care of bodies, and he would see no contradiction in The United Methodist Church starting and strengthening congregations while also seeking to eradicate killer diseases. Our conferences are at their best when they invigorate congregational worship, strengthen preaching, enhance youth ministries, and cultivate new faith communities while they also lead congregations to dig water wells, work with at-risk children, confront racism, and advocate for immigration reform. For us to focus on ridding the world of killer diseases does not distract congregations from their purpose; it resurrects their sense of purpose. For us to focus on starting new churches does not dull our ministries of justice; it provides them an invigorating spiritual grounding.

I hope we help one another avoid dualism and reclaim our Wesleyan roots. The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Both elements – making disciples and transforming the world – are essential. Following Christ involves both praying hands and dirty fingernails.

ART AND SOUL PRAYER FORM

“Following Christ involves praying hands and dirty fingernails.”^{iv} – Martyn Atkins

“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let all know and perceive and recognize your gentleness. The Lord is near. Do not fret, or have any anxiety about anything; but in every circumstance and in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving continue to make your wants known to God.” Phil 4.4-5

Place one hand, palm down upon a blank page of paper (in your journal or otherwise), and outline it with a pen or pencil.

Think of an object or image that reflects or symbolizes God’s grace for you (a cross, heart, water, bird, etc.). Draw that item on the paper, in the center of the hand you’ve just outlined. Using colored markers, prayerfully and with thanksgiving, color in the symbol.

Coloring the Five Finger Prayer. Using a pencil or black marker, write the following prayer focus above each finger and thumb as directed:

- Thumb – friends and family
- Index Finger – Mentors, coaches and/or spiritual directors
- Middle Finger – Leaders
- Ring Finger – The weak, lost, ill
- Little Finger – Myself

Beginning with the thumb and theme for family and friends, ask “Lord, whom would you have me pray for today?” Pause in prayer and listen for one or two names to come to mind. Write these names near, or on, the thumb. Around each name write a single word or draw an image that expresses your prayerful intentions for these persons. When done say, “Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayers.”

Repeat the process for each finger/theme.

When done look upon your soulful expression. How and with whom is God inviting you to respond to this week? Be in prayer about your following through with an act of service or fellowship and thank God for the prompting and courage to do as led.

Close with the daily prayer for the week. Amen.

Sunday Sabbath

“Every faithful and fruitful congregation practices both acts of piety and acts of mercy.”^v Robert Schnase

God’s first act of creation was when God said, “Let there be light.” (Gen. 1-3) God’s light permeates all of creation. It is our responsibility as the children of light to release God’s light into the world everyday; in word, in deed, in any and every ordinary way. Sabbath reminds us that we have a role in the ongoing work of creation.

Close with the daily prayer for the week. Amen.

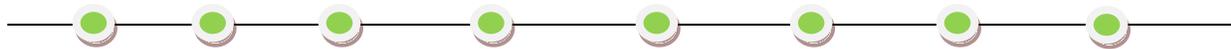
Prayer Knots and Lectio Divina

“Acts of piety feed our relationship with God. [Acts of mercy] we serve others for the purpose of Christ.”^{vi} Robert Schnase

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Mark 12.28-34

Find a simple piece of cording, yarn or string. Cut a single piece about 16 inches long. You may use multiple pieces of string, of equal length, for added thickness.

Tie 8 knots of equal distance, beginning about 1.5 inches from one end of the cording. See diagram below.



This cording, with knots, shall be used as a prayer tool known as a prayer cord. Today you’ll use it as a way to pray the scripture and reflect upon it in life changing ways (yours and others). Pray the passage as follows:

Beginning at one end of the prayer cord, pause in prayer, asking for these words to be sealed upon your heart. Work through the passage, one knot at a time. Don't rush through the process. Allow God's living word to invite you into holy conversation.

- Knot One: The first is this,
- Knot Two: You shall love the Lord your God
- Knot Three: with all your heart,
- Knot Four: and with all your soul,
- Knot Five: and with all your mind,
- Knot Six: and with all your strength,
- Knot Seven: The second is this,
- Knot Eight: you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

When you've worked through the verse one time, repeat the process again.

Afterwards, reflect upon the experience in your journal. Reflect upon the following questions.

1. What word or image grasps your attention? This is God's word for you this week.
2. What response, thoughts, insights were stirred within?
3. How have you experienced the love of God?
4. How might you be able to help another experience God's love?

Close with the daily prayer for the week. Amen.

WALKING PRAYER AND GUIDED REFLECTION

"Acts of piety and acts of mercy are like two wings of a bird; without either one, we cannot fly."^{vii} - Martyn Atkins

"And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love." 2 John 1.6

"While Christians may have one of the highest theologies of the body among the religions of the world, we also have one of the lowest levels of embodied spiritual practice."^{viii} In our nation we are surrounded by parks, fitness centers and all other kinds of activities to engage the world in action. Yet when we step into the church to enter into praise and worship with our Divine Lord, we all too often check our bodies at the door. We must be careful of such

dualism, especially when we are to be a reflection of Christ's body, redeemed by his blood, in loving action with the world.

Today, you will engage walking as a prayer form by taking a silent walk by yourself or with a prayer partner.

Before beginning, sit down, read the quote and Bible passage.

Lay your hands, palms up, upon your legs. Gaze upon these hands, they are wings by which the Holy desires to guide your acts of mercy and piety. Focus upon your hands – these are the conduits of being in love with God and with others.

As you begin to walk (at any pace comfortable for you), do so with an attitude of opening yourself to God.

As you walk, open and shut your hands periodically, praying these words,

“These hands are Your hands. My hands are Your hands Lord.”

When you return, take time to briefly journal your thoughts and feelings. Make a list of persons you may have thought of or ideas that came to mind.

1. How might you act upon one or two of these in the next several days?
2. Might one of them be an act of service this week?
3. How might your wings spread wide with grace today?

Close with the daily prayer of the week. Amen.

DAY OF FASTING

“We cannot allow our calling to serve the world to justify an unwillingness to focus on deepening the spiritual life and witness ... we hope to help one another avoid dualism and reclaim our Wesleyan roots.”^{ix} Robert Schnase

“God humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Deut. 8.3

For John Wesley, living a life of grace as a committed Christian required self-denial. One way in which to do that was to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. John Wesley identified fasting as a means of grace and act of piety. He strongly encouraged early Methodists to do it at least once a week (on Fridays) and to do so by refraining from eating from morning to evening.

Today, you shall practice this form of fasting, known as normal fasting. It is the practice of “abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water” from sun up to sun down.^x

- **Morning Preparation:** Before sun rise, prepare spiritually by reading Deut. 8.3. Pray for God’s strength and courage to sustain you through your fast. “Break bread” with a word of thanksgiving as you eat a small breakfast.
- **Fasting:** For the remainder of the day, till sundown, you will not eat anything. Throughout the day when you feel a wave of hunger, pause in prayer, turning your attention to God as the Bread of Life. Recall part of the passage from Deut. 8.3, “man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from God.”

Rules for fasting:

- 1. If sick, traveling or under unusual stress do not practice the fast.**
- 2. While fasting, drink plenty of water.**
- 3. Fasting will affect your energy level so plan accordingly and reduce your normal activity for the day.**

- **Breaking Fast:** At sundown, partake in a small well balanced dinner. Say grace before taking your first bite.

Wesley once said, “To love things of the world is to allow that desire to eclipse our love of God and neighbor.” While fasting today, how did you notice the truth of this comment? Journal your thoughts.

Close with the daily prayer for this week. Amen.

A DAY OF SERVICE

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Both elements – making disciples and transforming the world – are essential.^{xi} **Robert Schnase**

“Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Matt. 25.40

Dag Hammarskjold said, “In our era, the road to holiness passes through the world of action.”^{xii} So it was for the early Methodist; the same is true of Methodism today. Based upon

your prayers and the focus of this week, be attentive to another's need. Plan to take intentional time this week to do an act of service for another.

- At the end of the day take time to journal your experience.
- What did you do?
- How was it received?
- What were your initial feelings about doing this act?
- How did you feel afterward?
- Where was God while you were working?
- How was it an act of prayer for you?

Close with the daily prayer for the week. Amen.

ⁱ Robert Schnase, *Remember the Future; Praying for the Church and Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 28.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 24-28.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 26. Mary Atkins, presentation at the 2011 World Methodist Conference in South Africa.

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v *Ibid.*

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 24.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 25.

^{viii} Roy DeLeon, *Praying With The Body* (Brewster; Paraclete Press, 2009), ix.

^{ix} Schnase, *Remember the Future*, 26-27.

^x Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast; An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville; Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), pg. 81.

^{xi} Schnase, *Remember the Future*, 27.

^{xii} Dag Hammarskjold, *Markings* (New York; Alfred A Knopf, 1964), 122.