

BL OOMING THIS SPRING



ASH WEDNESDAY, March 6

5:45 pm Pancake Fellowship Meal

6:45 pm Worship

Commit to making use of the Community Unity Lenten Prayer Journal during the 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays)



FAMILY PROMISE

Hosting families April 14-21. Volunteer to serve.

HOLY WEEK, April 14-20



PALM SUNDAY worship, April 14, 10 am

Featuring Joyful Noise Together

Fellowship immediately following worship



MAUNDY THURSDAY, April 18, 6:30 pm

Family-style meal



GOOD FRIDAY Tenebrae Worship

April 19, 7 pm



EASTER SUNRISE Service, 7 am

Prayer Garden

EASTER BREAKFAST

Marye Garrett Room, immediately following sunrise service

EASTER WORSHIP, 10 am

With the sacraments of baptism and communion

EASTER EGG HUNT

Immediately following worship

COMMUNITY UNITY LENTEN

Prayer Journal

Committed to 40 Days
in Conversations with Christ

**PRAYER • READING AND STUDYING SCRIPTURE
WORSHIP • COMMUNION • FASTING
CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION (SMALL GROUPS)**



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Using this Prayer Journal

This collection of prayers in scripture and fresh practices is designed to guide our understanding of prayer. Our daily prayers will also unite our congregation as one voice. Consider reading and studying differently each day so you hear the diversity of voices in scripture, from the early prophets to Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Drawing closer to God. Try reading aloud in your quiet place each morning or evening. Draw closer to Christ and learn to trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Watch for God's presence in your life . . . take time to listen for Jesus' voice . . . and respond to promptings from the Holy Spirit to take action.

If you observe 40 days of unified prayer, also fast at some time during those days. When you fast remove something in your life that gets in the way of your relationship with God. Redirect that time to prayer. Reflect on this experience with God—being attentive to God's presence and leading.

Fasting may include

- Exchanging *unhealthy* foods, attitudes, habits, or language with healthy ones
- Omitting a meal then taking that time to pray
- Giving up time on social media or with electronic games and replace with prayer, reading, or new hobbies
- Taking on exercise and using that as quiet time with God
- Exchanging bitterness and unforgiveness for joyful relationships

Intentionally keep the Sabbath at least once a week. Put away distractions—remotes, cell phones, computers, etc.

On Saturdays, prepare for worship by reading the sermon scripture beforehand and praying for the pastor, choir, those in the congregation, and those who are being moved to attend. Then, with a spirit of worship keep God in Christ as your central focus.

Write about your insights at least once a week.

Resources

Shepard E and others. *The Art of Spiritual Formation, 2018 North Georgia Annual Conference.*

Smith Sr, MR. *Spiritual Disciplines and Christian Leadership: Are You a Kingdom Leader?* Maitland, FL: Xulon Press (self-publishing), 1982.

United Methodist Church website accessed February 2019.
<http://www.umc.org/how-we-serve/the-wes;euam-means-of-grace>
<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/re-energize-your-prayer-litany>

Biblical references quoted from www.biblegateway.com, accessed February 2019.

CEB *Common English Bible*

MSG *The Message*

NIV *New International Version*

NRSV *New Revised Standard Version*

COVENANT PRAYER

In the Wesleyan Tradition, UM Hymnal #607

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by 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

MONDAY

March 11

ASK—⁵LORD God of heaven, great and awesome God, you are the one who keeps covenant and is truly faithful to those who love you and keep your commandments. Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant, which I now pray before you night and day for your servants, the people of [Marvin]. (Nehemiah 1:5-6 CEB)

TUESDAY

March 12

The LORD said: ⁵“Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it...⁷Give careful thought to your ways.” (Haggai 1:5-7 NIV)

WEDNESDAY

March 13

When Solomon finished the temple in Jerusalem, he and the people consecrated it to the Lord. The people worshipped God saying, “He is good; his love endures forever.” In response the Lord went to Solomon during the night with assurance of an enduring presence in that place of worship.

The Lord said: ¹⁴“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. ¹⁶I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.” (2 Chronicles 7:14-16 NIV)

THURSDAY

March 14

God told the Hebrew people as they fled slavery in Egypt that it was time to move on. Pray that we also hear the voice of God guiding us to move on, move forward trusting in God’s abiding presence. “At Horeb, the Lord our God told us: You’ve been at this mountain long enough. Get going!” (Deuteronomy 1:6-7 CEB)

THURSDAY

April 18

Read Matthew 26:36-46. Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Accompanied by Peter, James, and John, the three could not stay awake. Three times Jesus prayed and returned to find them asleep. Jesus revealed his humanity by expressing his feeling of being sad and anxious, asking that this cup of suffering be taken from him, and resolving not his will but God’s will be done.

Today remember the times when you have felt such deep emotions—Talk with Christ about the depth of your emotions. How do you connect with Christ’s human feelings? Now pray.

FRIDAY

April 19

Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century taught what he called the *Daily Examen*. Add this approach to evening prayer to your day. Try it! At the end of the day take time to reflect on your life. Remember how Jesus prayed in the Garden.

At bedtime have a conversation with God that examines your words, deeds and actions throughout the day.

1. Share with God that for which you are thankful
2. Reflect on events of the day and look for God’s presence in these events
3. Admit your shortcomings
4. Ask God to prepare you for the next day
5. Listen for God’s response which may be more correcting and forgiving than judging

SATURDAY prepare to worship

April 20

Christ is Risen
Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18
Luke 24:1-12

My Insights _____

Holy Week prayers focus on Jesus' seven words on the cross.

MONDAY

April 15

1. Before Jesus' clothes were divided up by casting of lots, he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" Luke 23:34 NIV. *See also Psalm 22:1 NIV:* "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?"
2. Jesus to the criminal crucified near him. "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43 NIV
3. Jesus saw his mother at the foot of the cross and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby. Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." John 19:26 NIV

Focus your Prayer Conversation on FORGIVENESS—Pray for FORGIVENESS, not just for yourself but for others like us who do not deserve God's favor. Cry out for God's MERCY!

TUESDAY

April 16

4. At three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). Mark 15:34 NIV
5. Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." John 19:28 NIV

Today's Prayer Conversation—Recognize your THIRST for God and express gratitude throughout the day.

WEDNESDAY

April 17

6. When Jesus drank the vinegar water, he declared, "It is finished." John 19:30 NIV
7. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he said this, he breathed his last breath as foretold in scripture (Luke 23:46 NIV). *See also Psalm 31:5 NIV:* "Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, LORD, my faithful God."

Today's Prayer Conversation—Recommit your life to Christ using this breath prayer throughout the day.

Breathe in: You are mine.

Breath out: I am yours.

FRIDAY

March 15

The Israelites were led out of slavery in Egypt by Moses. They were whining and grumbled all the way. When he came down from Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai) with the 10 commandments on tablets, he found the former slaves worshipping a golden calf. God would have killed the ungrateful people, but Moses intervened. Pleading in prayer, like Moses, ask God to go with us.

"If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

¹⁷And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

¹⁸Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

¹⁹And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence." (Exodus 33:15b-19 NIV)

SATURDAY PREPARE TO WORSHIP

March 16

With All My Heart: *Take Heart ...*
Psalm 27

My insights

MONDAY

March 18

Hannah wanted children but was unable to conceive. For years she prayed and it seemed that her prayers would never be answered. Out of desperation Hannah wept and prayed with such intensity the Priest Eli thought she was drunk. She would not give up on her dream of motherhood.

Her words still help us when disappointed, disillusioned, or desperate. Pray “Lord, Remember Marvin.”

¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me.” (1 Samuel 1:10-11a NIV)

TUESDAY

March 19

King David asked for God’s forgiveness for his sins. David took another man’s wife, Bathsheba ... when she became pregnant, he called her husband back from the front line of battle ... attempted to trick him into sleeping with his wife but he would not ... so David sent him back to the front lines carrying his own death sentence. The commander was given orders to put Uriah out front and withdraw so he would be killed. David married Bathsheba, but the baby died (2 Samuel 11-12). David realized his sin when Nathan came to him and David declared himself guilty. David prayed in anguish. What is your sin? Pray David’s prayer.

¹“Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin ...

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.”

Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12 NRSV

Remember, in the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.

THURSDAY

April 11

Is your heart right with God? Are you bearing good fruit or bad? “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” (Luke 6:45 NIV)

Look into your heart—Ask God to remove any evil in your life that blocks your intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Ask Christ to remove those stumbling blocks.

FRIDAY

April 12

These were troubled times for the Jews living under Roman rule during Jesus’ lifetime. The Jews prayerfully watched for a redeemer, savior, and *warrior* to rid them of the tyrants. Instead, God sent a baby born in Bethlehem who grew into a compassionate God-man. Jesus healed the vulnerable even on the Sabbath. He called out the ruling class as self-serving, hypocrites. He blesses those who suffer in this world with the promise of their reward in heaven. Pray that we be like Christ showing compassion for others.

Read *Lectio Divina* style Jesus’ sermon on the plain
Luke 6:17-26. See page 3, March 6.

SATURDAY prepare to worship

April 13

Palm Readings—*Entering Jerusalem*
Luke 19:28-40

Passion of Christ Readings—*Crucifixion*
Luke 22:14-23:56; 23:1-49

My Insights

MONDAY

April 8

The Psalms lead us to experience a wide range of human emotions from praise and worship to anger and disappointment. Today find a psalm that expresses your emotion today.

Today focus your prayers on your emotions—Read the Psalm as if you are personally addressing God. For example, Psalm 106:1 “I praise you Lord. I give thanks to you for you are good; your love endures forever.”

TUESDAY

April 9

First John 4 wants us to know that ¹⁶“God is love . . . ¹⁹We love because he first loved us . . . ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

Today focus your prayers on LOVE to understand the depth of God’s love. Then look for signs of God’s love throughout the day.

WEDNESDAY

April 10

GRACE is the unconditional love of God in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2 makes clear the depth of God’s love.

⁴⁻⁵ However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God’s grace! ⁶ And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. ⁷ God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. ⁹ It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. ¹⁰ Instead, we are God’s accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Today look for the presence of God’s saving GRACE in your life. That’s the unconditional, unearned, love of God in Jesus Christ. Now, write a short prayer of thanks to God. Put it in a safe place. When you find it again be ready to receive a double blessing.

WEDNESDAY

March 20

David’s sins cut deeply into his heart. It takes a lot to admit our sins to God. But God already knows and waits for us to own those wrongs. In **Psalm 32**, David claims happiness comes when wrongdoing is confessed.

- ¹ The one whose wrongdoing is forgiven,
whose sin is covered over, is truly happy!
² The one the LORD doesn’t consider guilty—
in whose spirit there is no dishonesty—
that one is truly happy!

THURSDAY

March 21

For David sin weighs him down. Anything weighing you down? Pray with David . . .

- ³ When I kept quiet, my bones wore out;
I was groaning all day long—
every day, every night!—
⁴ because your hand was heavy upon me.
My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought.
⁵ So I admitted my sin to you;
I didn’t conceal my guilt.
“I’ll confess my sins to the LORD,” is what I said.
Then you removed the guilt of my sin.

FRIDAY

March 22

David asks for forgiveness . . .

- ⁶ That’s why all the faithful should pray to you during troubled times, so that a great flood of water won’t reach them.
⁷ You are my secret hideout!
You protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of rescue!
¹⁰ The pain of the wicked is severe,
but faithful love surrounds the one who trusts the LORD.

SATURDAY prepare to worship

March 23

With All My Heart: *I Thirst* . . .
Psalm 63:1-8

MONDAY

March 25

Two blind men followed Jesus and called out to him this prayer, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” Jesus asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They replied, “Yes, Lord.” Their eyes were opened. Pray for God’s mercy always trusting and believing that you will be heard. (Matthew 9:27-28 NIV)

Today’s Prayer Conversation—In conversation with Christ throughout the day, if he asks if you believe he is able, just say, “Yes, Lord!”

TUESDAY

March 26

Teaching his disciples, Jesus cautions that things which cause people to stumble will come. But woe to those who cause one of the little ones to stumble. “If your brother or sister sins warn them to stop. If they change their hearts and lives, forgive them. Even if someone sins against you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times and says, ‘I am changing my ways,’ you must forgive that person.” (Luke 17:3-5 CEB). Then the apostles asked the Lord in prayer, “Increase our faith!”

Today’s Prayer Conversation—Who needs your forgiveness? Just do it. Pray asking Christ to “Increase my faith!”

WEDNESDAY

March 27

A man covered with leprosy (skin disease) saw Jesus and fell on his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Lepers were outsiders, untouchables in the community. But Jesus reached out and touched the man responding, “I am willing. Be clean!” The man was healed, the news spread, and crowds came to hear Jesus. After a long day of healing and caring for others, “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:12-16 NIV)

Today’s Prayer Conversation—Take time to withdraw to a quiet place knowing that Christ is still in the healing business. Listen and you can still hear him saying, “Be clean.” He can make you whole again by healing your mind, body, spirit, and relationships. Ask!

THURSDAY

April 4

In Revelation 10, an angel told John to take the scroll from the angel’s hand. ⁹ “Take it and eat it. It will make you sick to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.” The scroll is the righteous word of God which is now our Bible. John ate the scroll, ¹⁰ “And it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I swallowed it, it made my stomach churn.” The Old Testament Prophets Ezekiel (3:1-3) and Jeremiah (15:16) also told us to eat the scroll.

Today’s Prayer Conversation—Ask Christ to help you commit to eating the scroll knowing that it will be sweet as honey in your mouth but will ultimately make your stomach churn. The truth of God’s word is both sweet and painful because of its ageless truths.

FRIDAY

April 5

Walk a labyrinth to learn how to focus your prayer. This ancient design for prayer walking may look like a maze but is not. Labyrinths are a single path that lead to a center and back out. Try to prayer walk a labyrinth in our community:

1. Walking slowly, enter the labyrinth focused on your confession to God or present your most pressing concern to God.
2. Following the path to the center; stop there in silence until your spirit leads you to reverse your path walking out.
3. Walking out, listen to God. What are you to do with your new insight?

Find a labyrinth to walk

- Church of Our Savior, 4227 Columbia Rd, Martinez, *behind church, always open*
- Church of the Good Shepherd, 2230 Walton Way, Augusta, *open Tuesdays 8 am-6 pm, other times by appointment*
- St. Augustine of Canterbury Episcopal Church, 3321 Wheeler Rd, Augusta, *always open*
- Print a labyrinth from computer and finger walk the path using the three steps above. Website for finger labyrinth <https://zdi1.zd-cms.com/cms/res/files/382/ChartresLabyrinth.pdf>

SATURDAY prepare to worship

April 6

Overcoming the Past
Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14 CEB

Prayer is conversation with our triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Each day this week learn new ways of being in conversation and relationship with our triune God.

MONDAY

April 1

Psalm 46 encourages us to be still. God tells us to stop trying to please him. ¹⁰ “That’s enough! Now know that I am God.”

Today practice being still. Begin by setting your watch or cell phone, kitchen timer, or play relaxing music or nature sounds for 3-5 minutes. Now, be still.

TUESDAY

April 2

Breath Prayer is today’s new way of being in conversation with the Holy Spirit who is as near as the air we breathe. This short prayer is complete with one breath, exhale. For example, Hannah’s prayer, “Remember me;” David’s “Give me a clean heart;” Moses’ “Go with us;” or the disciples’ “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Today practice a breath prayer. Decide on the words you want to speak. Repeat your breath prayer each time you exhale. Every time you think to do it throughout the day—while driving, walking, and exercising; between calls; while cooking, cleaning or shaving.

WEDNESDAY

April 3

Use your senses as you engage in prayer. Candles, incense, crosses, prayer beads, working with clay or wood, gardening, grooming your pet, listening to music, etc. The prophet Jeremiah heard the voice of God as he watched a potter. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.” (Jeremiah 18:6 NIV)

Today practice using your senses (*sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell*) to connect with God.

THURSDAY

March 28

People brought a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. The people begged Jesus to place his hand on him. Jesus took him aside away from the crowd. Then he placed his fingers in the man’s ears. He spit and touched the man’s tongue. Jesus looked to heaven and with a deep sigh said, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means “Be opened!”). The man began to speak plainly. “People were overwhelmed with amazement.” (Mark 7:31-37 NIV)

Today’s Prayer Conversation—Be in conversation with God throughout the day praying that ... your ears are open to hear others ... and your tongue brings peace, comfort, and joy to those who were *invisible* to you before Christ removed the scales from your eyes.

FRIDAY

March 29

At the last supper Jesus ate with his disciples, there were many conversations going on around the table. Jesus talked with one of his most trusted confidants, Simon Peter, also called Cephas. Jesus called out, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Simon swore loyalty to Christ through prison and death. Jesus cautioned Simon, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.” (Luke 22:31-34 NIV)

Today’s Prayer Conversation—Conclude your work week in conversation with Christ about your loyalty to him before the rooster crows Saturday morning.

SATURDAY prepare to worship

March 30

With All My Heart: *I Am Forgiven*

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

My Insights _____
