

“Expanding Our Prayers” **“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, ESV)**

“Pray without ceasing.” This is among the shortest verses in the Bible (two words in the original language). Yet this is a powerful verse that describes God’s intention for the Christian life. For prayer is the immense privilege Christians are given to speak to the Creator of the universe. And this is only possible because we’ve been reconciled to God through the saving work of His Son. Therefore Jesus ought to always be at the center of prayer. Prayer, though, is not a Means of Grace. Prayer also isn’t a way for a human being to try to control or impress or earn the favor of God. And obviously prayer is not something to be used superstitiously – treating it like some sort of a magic code or a mysterious puzzle whereby we unlock Divine blessings by saying the right words in the right places and for the right number of times. This is the stuff of paganism (which always tries to interject itself into Christian doctrine and practice).

Instead, prayer is a wonderful gift – one that Holy Scripture exhorts Christians to engage in all the time. For through Christ, believers are able thank & praise God and even ask Him to supply their daily needs. And God wants to hear from us.

With this in mind, I’m announcing a change and an expansion to our prayer list at church. I’ve talked with members & leaders at both congregations about developing two prayer lists. There has been general agreement. I’m grateful for the feedback and suggestions that have been offered.

So, the plan is to have two prayer lists – one short term and one long term. Prayers dealing with current and immediate concerns will appear in the bulletin each Sunday. These concerns could be situations like recent illness, injury, hospitalization, or the death of a loved one. And these prayers could also be prayers of thanksgiving upon occasions of celebration - like birthdays, graduations, weddings, anniversaries, etc.. These prayers will be the short term prayer list. The names of those being prayed for on this list will appear in the bulletin each week and be included in the spoken prayers during the worship service. If short term prayer needs should become long term prayer needs, then the individual being prayed for will automatically be transferred to the long term list.

The long term prayer list will include those with chronic needs. These names will appear in the newsletter each month, along with the names of our shut-ins (whom we should also regularly remember in our prayers). The members of both congregations (i.e. God’s church) are being asked to include those on the long term list in their daily and personal prayers. Therefore the prayers of the church will continually be made by God’s people throughout the week as we **“pray without ceasing.”**

As usual, additions to or subtractions from the prayer list (short term or long term) ought to be made by contacting me. I am requesting your assistance with the long term prayer list. Some individuals have been on the prayer list for years (literally). Numerous members of the congregation wonder how the individuals on our weekly list are doing because there tends to be little follow-up provided to church members as to the current condition of the individuals being prayed for week in and week out. Have they received what is being prayed for? Are the sick getting better? Have those who are suffering been experiencing relief? We assume that the folks

on the prayer list are still living in this world, but even I as your pastor cannot say with absolute certainty if everyone on our prayer list is still alive simply because some of them aren't members of either congregation and therefore I don't know them personally.

So, I'm asking for your help. Occasional updates on those who will be on our long term prayer list would be much appreciated. This would help to ensure that our prayer list will be accurate and up to date. Feel free to pass along such information by speaking with me on Sunday morning, or by slipping me a note when at church, or by calling me at the parsonage anytime (906-934-2570).

Also, some members have indicated that they would like to have a little more detail about what they are being asked to pray for concerning those who have requested to be on the church's prayer list. With the weekly prayer list in church normally having over 25 names on it, it's been deemed too time consuming to verbally include great detail about every person mentioned in the prayers (added to that, many have asked that the reason for their prayer request remain unknown). Also, there simply is not enough room in the Sunday bulletin to include a great amount of written detail. The hope is that this change and expansion to two prayer lists will provide a solution. Under this new arrangement, the short term prayer list most likely will be much smaller than it has in the past – making it easier to include a little more detail in the Sunday morning prayers. The same will be true for the long term prayers. There will be more room in the newsletter to list names and specific needs than there has been in the weekly bulletin. Nevertheless, no one will be required to divulge personal details in order to submit a name to the prayer list – you have a right to privacy. Yet, if you are comfortable doing so, you are encouraged to let your brothers and sisters in Christ know why you are asking for their prayers. And as always, you are welcome to ask your pastor (aka me) to pray for you in my own private prayers if you don't wish to be prayed for publicly.

So, as we expand our prayers into two lists, let us continue to *“pray without ceasing”* - knowing that God promises to hear and answer our prayers through Christ our crucified and risen Lord. My hope is that classifying our prayer list according to short term and long term will help us to better manage the prayers of the church, as well as help us to have more focused and informed prayers as we seek to be vigilant, responsible, and faithful in calling upon our Lord.

In Christ,
Pastor

PS – Don't forget that we will gather together for our Ascension Day joint worship service at St. Paul's on Thursday, May 18th. The worship service starts at 7PM. Thanks be to God for this opportunity to gather for prayer on Ascension Day. See you in church ~ Pastor.

Psalm Readings for May

WEEK ONE: Sunday, April 30; PSALM 115; Monday, May 01; PSALM 116; Tuesday, May 02; PSALM 117; Wednesday, May 03; PSALM 118:1-14; Thursday, May 04; PSALM 118:15-29; Friday, May 05; PSALM 119:1-8; Saturday, May 06; PSALM 119:9-16

WEEK TWO: Sunday, May 07; PSALM 119:17-24; Monday, May 08; PSALM 119:25-32; Tuesday, May 09; PSALM 119:33-40; Wednesday, May 10; PSALM 119:41-48; Thursday, May 11; PSALM 119:49-56; Friday, May 12; PSALM 119:57-64; Saturday, May 13, PSALM 119:65-72

WEEK THREE: Sunday, May 14; PSALM 119:73-80; Monday, May 15; PSALM 119:81-88; Tuesday, May 16; PSALM 119:89-96; Wednesday, May 17; PSALM 119:97-104; Thursday, May 18; PSALM 119:105-112; Friday, May 19; PSALM 119:113-120; Saturday, May 20; PSALM 119:121-128

WEEK FOUR: Sunday, May 21; PSALM 119:129-136; Monday, May 22; PSALM 119:137-144; Tuesday, May 23; PSALM 119:145-152; Wednesday, May 24; PSALM 119:153-160; Thursday, May 25; PSALM 119:161-168; Friday, May 26; PSALM 119:169-176; Saturday, May 27; PSALM 120

WEEK FIVE: Sunday, May 28; PSALM 121; Monday, May 29; PSALM 122; Tuesday, May 30; PSALM 123; Wednesday, May 31; PSALM 124; Thursday, June 01; PSALM 125; Friday, June 02; PSALM 126; Saturday, June 03; PSALM 127