

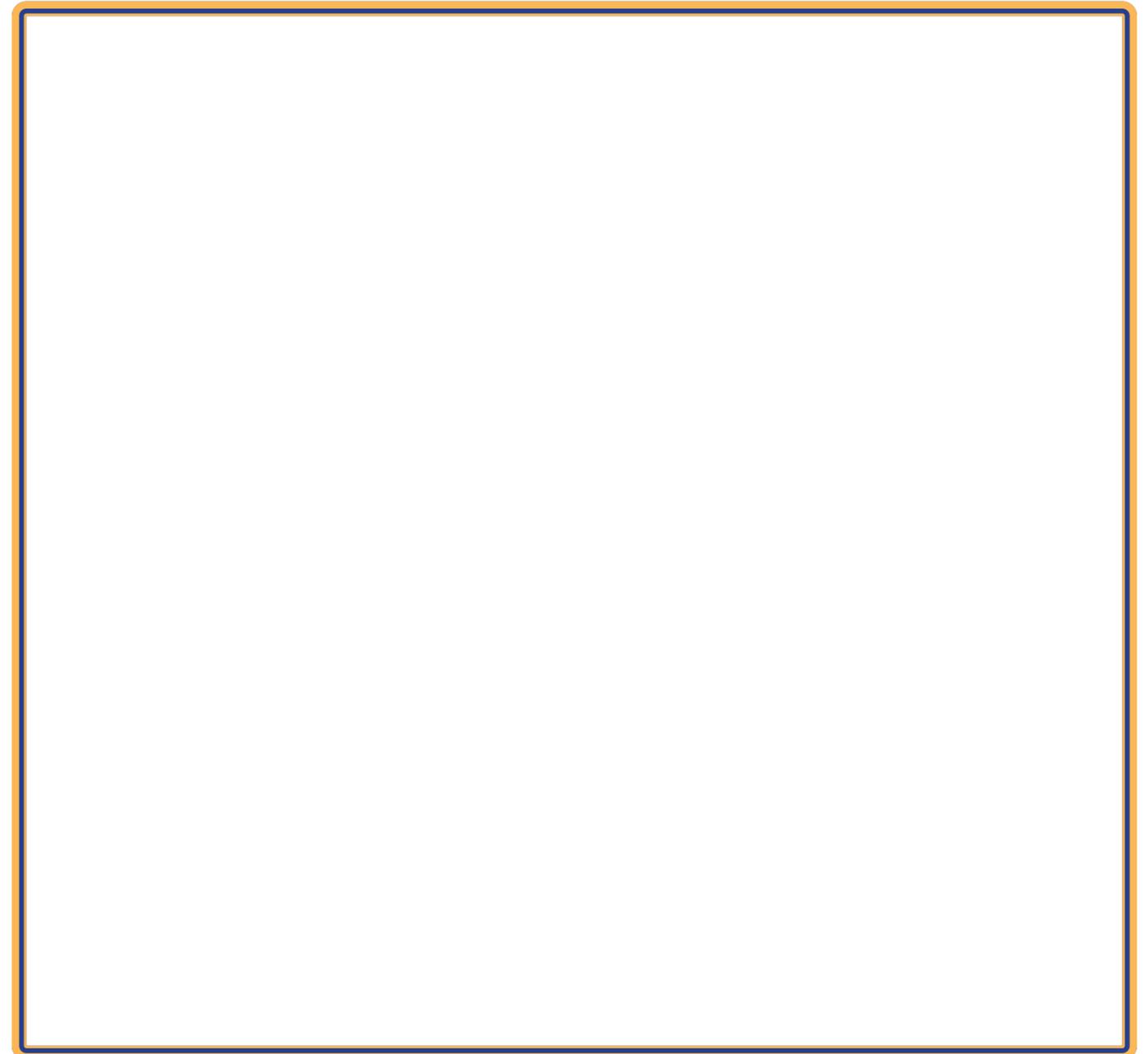
Questions for Reflection

In what ways do you “rest” in the context of sabbath? In what ways can your rest or sabbath observance promote justice or liberation in our society?

What is a realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful way you envision yourself resting? Is there a gap between how you currently live and the role rest might play in your life?

What kind of support do you need from yourself or those close to you in order to live into resting as fully as you wish to?

Is there any help you need from God or the church?



Rest

by The Rev. Michael Horvath, Curate

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Exodus 20:8-11 (NRSV)

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work— you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. Deuteronomy 5:13–15(NRSV)

Rest is vital to our well-being. At minimum, rest assumes a certain amount of time taken out of our day for stillness, sleep or some other cessation of physical activity. Rest also has implications in our Judeo-Christian context in the form of Sabbath.

Such rest, or Sabbath, is described two ways in the Hebrew Bible – first, as a memorialization of the works of Creation and, second, because we were once slaves and are now free. The Fourth Commandment, set out in the Exodus passage, reminds us to refrain from work on the seventh day (Sabbath) because even God rested in the arc of the work of Creation.

But what does ‘work’ really mean? The social scientist, Eric Fromm describes ‘work’ as “any interference by man, be it constructive or destructive, with the physical world. ‘Rest’ is a state of peace between man and nature.” (The Forgotten Language) Sabbath, whether we refer to it as Sunday or any other day on which we seek to gain a state of peace with God, reminds us of the tension between ‘work’ and ‘rest’ and God’s primacy over both. On this day that God has set aside as blessed and holy, everyone and everything, human and beast alike, rests as God rested, and we rejoice in all that God deems ‘good’ in his creation work, ourselves included.

The Book of Deuteronomy’s reference to Sabbath’s place as a reminder of past oppression seeks to promote a just society. It celebrates liberation and reminds us that God seeks to break the oppressive rhythms of poverty, addiction, violence, greed and corruption. While most people are no longer subject to institutionalized slavery, slavery persists in various incarnations in many parts of the world. Individuals are subject to cheap labor work that produces many of the products we consume, wear or use, while making wages that keep them well below the poverty line.

Closer to home, more and more families work longer hours for less pay, while watching their savings and wealth evaporate. Salaries below a living-wage force many to work every day, sometimes two or more jobs, simply to provide shelter and food for their families. With such economic oppression, a commonplace reality in our world, it is hard to consider our society truly free.

Sabbath gives us a taste of true freedom through rest, but our experience of this freedom should be tempered by the knowledge that not all people are free to sample the joys of rest. Sabbath is a reminder of our moral and religious obligation to demand a society where everyone can afford to feed their family AND take time off to feed their soul.

Introduction

By Rebecca Hall, Director of Adult Christian Formation

Welcome to the *Way of Discipleship*, as envisioned by the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. We participate in this movement by the way we live, and by the practices we undertake. Being Christian is much more than just attending worship, giving money, and assenting to a set of beliefs. It is, everyday, trying to live a Jesus-shaped life. If that sounds like a daunting task, do not fear. That is the purpose of the church - to give you the teaching, the support, the encouragement, and the community of fellow-followers that you will need to live this way.

The Way of Discipleship is a framework for living a Christian life. Being a disciple includes turning, learning, praying, worshiping, blessing, going, and resting. If we do these things with intentionality, it sets us up for living fulfilling, meaningful lives.

This booklet is designed to be some preliminary teaching for you to get you thinking - either alone or in a group. After each teaching, you are invited to reflect on your life and how you currently live the Way of Discipleship - because you most likely are living this way in many areas. We will invite you to ask yourself where you would like to be, compassionately keeping your life circumstances and responsibilities in mind. And finally, we will ask you to reflect on what you might need from yourself, your community, and from God to live the Way of Discipleship in the way you want.

We hope you experience this booklet and the reflection process as supportive, encouraging, and freeing. It shouldn’t feel rigid or restrictive. And we hope it doesn’t prompt you to add a long list of things on your “to do” list every day. There may be activities or prayers you do decide to add. But, also, we encourage you to look carefully at what you are already doing in each area and reflect on how you can do each with more intentionality. In other words, how can you go deeper?

St. Benedict of Nursia, founder of some of the first monasteries and creator of a rule of life for community living that has been modeled for centuries, called the monastery a “workshop for the spiritual craft”. We believe that the church can benefit from some of this monastic wisdom and provide workshop space for followers of Jesus. And we hope that you find this “workshop” a place where you can grow and continue becoming the disciple that God is creating you to be.

Turn

by The Rev. Chad McCall, Associate Priest

Turn: Pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus

As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. – Mark 2:14

Like the disciples, we are called by Jesus to follow the Way of Love. With God's help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom. In turning, we reorient our lives to Jesus Christ, falling in love again, again, and again.

The Way of Discipleship appropriately starts with a turn—an active response to an invitation to follow. The spiritual journey/life begins with God's call and our decision to accept a relationship with our Creator. We decide to turn towards the loving voice of God, to actively explore and seek a deeper and more spiritual relationship with God and with the world around us. All of us are called into a life of discipleship and invited to follow Jesus, the question is how will we respond?

We turn from the distractions and sin of the world, deciding to choose a different path. We decide to set aside time for spiritual practices and to listen. Without a conscious effort, our schedules and lives will take over and we will be consumed by the world. We must decide to create space in our lives to be open to the presence of God; we must decide to be awake and aware. This process will require faith, time, and commitment. Some days or seasons we may be turning so often that we feel like we are stuck on an endlessly spinning carousel. We will struggle, we will have doubts, we will have questions, but what is important is that we keep turning, we keep seeking and searching for a deeper relationship. The decision to turn is not something that we only do once, it takes perseverance and commitment.

Yet we aren't just turning from something, we also have to turn towards God. When we accept the invitation to follow Jesus, we are entering into a relationship and like any relationship it requires care and tending. The spiritual practices of learn, pray, worship, bless, go, and rest are all meant to bring us deeper into the loving relationship that exists between us, our neighbors, and God. We are giving time, energy, and attention to the Holy. We don't just turn from the world, we must turn our focus onto God.

I love the idea of turning because while it is an active verb, it doesn't imply that we are doing anything but changing our perspective. God was already there, the love that supports and sustains the world was already there, all we have to do is make the effort to turn and to bear witness. Once we tune in and acknowledge the love of the Holy Spirit, it will become a part of us, and will wrap us up and carry us along as we participate in the community of the Spirit. We will partake and share in the love, but only after we have opened ourselves. We have to accept and participate in the love of God before we can share it with others.

And finally, as we are reminded in our baptismal covenant, we do all of this with God's help. It doesn't start with us, and we don't do this alone. We are meant to call on God for support every step of the way. We turn away from the world and towards God, but only with God's help...Amen

Questions for Reflection

How consciously or intentionally do you incorporate “going” into your spiritual life? Are there seasons of your life when “going” has been easier? More difficult? What role does “going” have in your life now?

What is a realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful way you envision yourself continuing to “go”? Is there a gap between how you currently live and where you desire to be?

What kind of support do you need from yourself and those close to you in order to “go”?

Is there any help you need from God or the church?



Questions for Reflection

How consciously or intentionally have you chosen to turn toward God and live a spiritual life? Look back over your spiritual journey and notice the points where you “turned”, even if it wasn’t planned or intentional.

What is a realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful way you envision yourself living a spiritual life? Is there a gap between how you currently live and where you desire to be?

What kind of support do you need to give yourself to turn and live into this spiritual life as fully as you wish to?

What help do you need from God or the church in order to turn and live a spiritual life as fully as you wish to?



Go

by Amy Moehnke, Director of Young Adult Ministry and Newcomers

Go: Cross Boundaries. Listen deeply. Live like Jesus.

Go. It's a common concept throughout the Biblical narrative:

God told Abraham to go - from his country, his kindred, his father's house to a land he did not know;

God told the Israelites to go - out of slavery in Egypt and into freedom in the wilderness;

God told Jeremiah to go - speak all that God commanded to all to whom he was sent;

God told Mary to go - to Bethlehem where she'd give birth to the One who would save the world;

Jesus told his disciples to go - feed the hungry, heal the broken, raise the dead;

Jesus told Mary Magdalene to go - tell her brothers that she had seen the Lord;

Jesus told his followers to go - into all the world and proclaim the good news to all of creation.

We come from a long line of Go-ers, people sent by God to unfamiliar places, with unfamiliar people, to do unfamiliar work. People who crossed boundaries, broke down barriers, made a way where there was not one before. People who would not be stopped by convention, or slowed down by doubt, or derailed by fear. People for whom Go-ing was how they experienced God's grace, how they knew God's love, how they shared God's mercy with all they encountered.

Go-ing, then, is our legacy, our heritage, it is what we "do" as Christ-followers. Whether it is with a careful intention or by some holy accident, we Go, rather than simply staying where we are even when the staying would be easier, less risky, more comfortable and safe.

When we Go, we open ourselves up to all kinds of possibilities: to be challenged, to be hurt, to be ignored, to be passed over; Or to be remade, to be strengthened, to be encouraged, to be blessed. When we Go we make known the loving Jesus, we embody the restoring Christ, we incarnate the risen Lord, we manifest the living God.

Our baptismal covenant repeatedly calls us to Go:

We are to Go: proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ;

We are to Go: seek and serve Christ in all persons loving our neighbor as ourselves;

We are to Go: strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Go proclaim, Go seek and serve, Go strive for justice - no small tasks, and not for the faint of heart. But possible, manageable, do-able for all who dare believe that the One who calls us to Go was the original Go-er, who paved the way for all the Go-ing he would ask us to do. For his sake, with his love, by his power. Let's Go!

Learn

by Rebecca Hall, Director of Adult Christian Formation

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What came into being was life, and the life was the light of all the people.” John 1:1-4

Humans grow and change no matter what - from birth to death. It’s just the nature of life. We make choices, things happen, we respond, and we are just a little different than before. We have learned and grown. A question to consider is, “What are we growing into?” When we live on autopilot, we are likely to grow into whatever version of ourselves the world would most affirm. Yet, the Way of Discipleship calls us to something more intentional, it calls us to grow into ourselves as a Jesus-shaped person, to live a Jesus-shaped life. And just like we must continually turn toward God and choose this life, we also need to come to a deeper and deeper understanding of what is Jesus-shaped for us and what isn’t.

In the Episcopal tradition we have three guides for determining “Jesus-shaped-ness”: scripture, tradition, and reason. Through these three doorways we are called into a life-long exploration of God, Jesus, the church, ourselves, the world, and the interconnectedness of all of these. We are called to continually learn.

Scripture: Our primary source for learning what being Jesus-shaped looks like lived out in a human life is scripture. Reading scripture on a regular basis is important. And we come to new understandings and insights about God, Jesus, ourselves, and our lives when we reflect and discuss scripture with other disciples and knowledgeable, mature mentors.

Tradition: The church has been asking the question, “What is Jesus-shaped and how do we become that?” for centuries. Learning about the history of the church, different spiritualities and psychology, ways of prayer, lives of the saints, and of course, our own Episcopal tradition can all inform our path of discipleship.

Reason: God created us in God’s image with the ability to think and reason. We are given this ability, not so that we can reject as irrelevant whatever we don’t like about scripture and tradition, but so that we can be discerning. We are given the ability to think theologically, and learn to see the world through Jesus glasses and not world glasses.

Learning is important not as an end in itself, but because it provides a framework, a foundation for a holistic life of discipleship. It would be difficult to continually turn, pray, bless, worship, go, and rest without a maturing understanding of the Christian life. And by learning and becoming Jesus-shaped, may we, like Jesus, become life and light to the world.

Questions for Reflection

How consciously or intentionally do you weave learning scripture and deepening your understanding of God into your spiritual life? What are examples of how you live that out?

What is a realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful way you envision yourself continuing to grow in understanding and knowledge? Is there a gap between how you currently live and where you wish to be?

What kind of support do you need from yourself or those close to you in order to live into learning as fully as you wish to?

What help do you need from God and the church?



Questions for Reflection

How consciously or intentionally do you incorporate being a blessing into your spiritual life? How do you bless people in your day to day life?

What is a realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful way you envision yourself blessing others and the world? Is there a gap between how you currently live and where you desire to be?

What kind of support do you need from yourself and those close to you in order to bless people in the world the way you would like?

Is there any help you need from God or the church?



Bless

by The Rev. Katie Wright, Assistant Rector

“Freely you have received; freely give.” – Matthew 10:8

“Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?” Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer:

“Jesus called his disciples to give, forgive, teach, and heal in his name. We are empowered by the Spirit to bless everyone we meet, practicing generosity and compassion and proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ with hopeful words and selfless actions. We can share our stories of blessing and invite others to the Way of Love.” From the “Way of Love Reflection and Discernment” materials, www.episcopalchurch.org

To Bless: To share gifts from God with others. To be a conduit of God’s love, grace and healing power.

To see and know and encourage those around you.

Blessing is both words and deeds and doesn’t stop with the person it is given to.

What does it mean to bless others? Is that something that only the priests can do? As Paul would say “By no means!” Every believer is called to share the many gifts we are given with others.

In a very physical way, this means to share materially - to give financially, to pass on items we can to others. Our financial gifts matter- both in reminding ourselves that everything we have is a gift from God and that we are blessed, and in helping others who do not have the resources we have. We are to look around ourselves and realize that the items we don’t need can be used by others and pass them on- from clothes going to worthwhile institutions to toys and children’s items passed on to others.

It also means to share the spiritual gifts we have been given with others - the joy, peace, wonder, compassion and tenderness. To really look at and greet the person standing at the corner. To hold the door for another or get a grocery cart out at the store. To point out the beauty in the world around us for others.

It can mean to be a conduit of God’s healing power - to pray with others in need and bring Christ’s healing power to them.

Through these blessings we are reminded that we are all one. We are all created by God and our lives and fulfillment are connected to each other. As the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams in his work titled, “Meeting God in Paul”, says: “It is a freedom for new kinds of relationship in which we are able to contribute to each other’s life and well being instead of threatening and feeling threatened by each other. [I]t is also a freedom to bring good news to each other. [I]o give life, to promise forgiveness and reconciliation, to communicate hope in word and action. These are the blessings we can bestow on one another.”

Our lives are enriched, bettered, by sharing our blessings - both giving and receiving. We need to be open to receiving from others also, to know that we are worthy of receiving blessings.

There are things that we don’t and shouldn’t bless - if they are destructive and not of God.

Yes, there is a particular blessing done in particular ways that is in our tradition performed by only the ordained - they are passing on the blessing of the church. But that is a very small piece of what blessing means and what we are all called to do.

Pray

by The Rev. Bob Gribble, Associate Priest

Will you continue in the apostles teaching and fellowship and in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers? P. 304 BCP

Prayer is part of our baptism, our promise, our commitment. When we think about prayer there will be folks who say, "I haven't a clue how to do it." And I think to myself, "yeah, they do. They just don't know they're doing it." There will be people who say, "What's the formula?" And, there are a few suggested formulas. But, being authentic, being yourself, just being in conversation is a good place to start.

In the Catechism on page 356-357 in BCP, we have these teachings:

What is prayer?

Prayer is responding to God in thought and deed with or without words

What is Christian Prayer?

Christian prayer is a response to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the spirit.

What prayer did Christ teach us? He gave us the example known as the Lord's Prayer. Jesus prayed all over the Christian scriptures. But there aren't a lot of examples of formulas for what he said. I think that's a reminder that we need to say, we need to trust, we need to embrace the fact that it is our conversation with God. It can be through works or in words and thoughts. Most certainly Christian prayer needs to be by intention. But it can be through a sigh or a thought that doesn't have anything specific. It's just us putting ourselves out to the universe, knowing that God is there, hearing what we have to say, and that God has compassion and cares.

Scripture points out, and we pick up in our Catechism, principle kinds of prayer. They are adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition. I, for one, am very good at intercession and petition and occasionally thanksgiving. But, on the other kinds, I can be negligent. Sometimes it is helpful for a season of the liturgical year to pay attention to the other kinds of prayer that are in the Catechism and that we don't usually engage.

We have the examples of Matt. 6: 9-13 and Luke 11:1-4 where people were clamoring for an example of prayer with Jesus. They even said to him, "John taught his disciples how to pray. Please teach us how to pray." And it was the Lord's prayer. There isn't much more instruction given other than that, except that Jesus prayed, he sought to pray, and indeed had the luxury of giving prayer. So, whether it's by thought or whether it's by word or whether it's by example, Jesus gives us the understanding that the connection with our maker is a holy and blessed place.

As a child I was taught a prayer written by Hannah More Kahaus, an Anglican woman who lived in the 18th century. I have to admit, my family taught me this prayer before they taught me the Lord's Prayer. And it helps me to think - and prayer often should help us think. And this is how it goes:

God is my help, in every need
God is my every hunger, feed
God walks besides me, guides my way
through every moment of the day
beyond and cares for us. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

How consciously or intentionally do you incorporate worship into your spiritual life? Look back over your life and notice the role worship has played.

What is a realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful place you envision worship taking in your spiritual life? Is there a gap between how you currently live and where you desire to be?

What kind of support do you need from yourself and those close to you in order to worship the way you would like?

Is there any help you need from God or the church?



I now am wise, I now am true,
patient, kind and loving, too
All things I am, can do and be
Through Christ the Lord who lives in me
God is my health, I can't be sick
God is my strength, unfailing, quick
God is my all, I need not fear
Since God and love and truth are here

I pull out this prayer regularly in my life, and from time to time I reflect on how I've grown in this particular prayer from my family. I hope you find one for your family that you can rest and grow in. For me, one of the reasons I look at it, is "I have the flu, and I say, God is my health I can't be sick". What?? What does that line mean? I gave it thought and throughout the ages of my life it makes more and more sense. That's what prayer does. It gives us an understanding of connection with our creator.

So whether it is technically by intention, or technically in the name of the Father through the power of the Spirit, and in the gift of Christ whether it has that formula or not, prayer is our communication with the one who is beyond and cares for us. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What is the current landscape of your prayer life?

Being realistic, compassionate, yet hopeful, what do you desire for your prayer life? Is there a gap between how you currently live and where you wish to be?

What kind of support do you need from yourself and those close to you to pray fully as you wish to?

Is there any help you need from God or the church?



Worship

by The Rev. Dr. Chuck Treadwell, Rector

"Will you continue in the apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers?"

-Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer

Worship - the praise and adoration of God - is common across religious traditions. Worship is at the heart of the Christian tradition as well. It is also particularly important to us as Episcopalians. Holy Scripture is filled with commands and invitations to worship God. It can be done individually or in groups, or as an entire congregation at the weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

Worship at its beginning has one purpose- to honor and adore God. In particular, for Christians, it is to honor the specific work that Jesus Christ accomplished through his life, teaching, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Christians believe that through the work of Christ the barrier between God and humanity created by sin has been removed. Worship, therefore, is to offer our thanks to God through Christ for this redemptive work.

Worship allows us to contemplate the beauty and majesty of God. It allows us to reflect on God's power, God's grace and God's love. It allows us to enter into God's presence. It places us in intimate proximity to Christ. It allows us to find our place, along with others in the work of the Kingdom of God.

While worship serves to bring us into the presence of God, worship also reveals for us the things in our lives that separate us from God and other people. It exposes sin, and also gives us avenues to confess sin and to be forgiven. Being in the presence of the Holy both humbles and inspires us. It calls us into a different kind of life. Worship delivers us from the Tyranny of the Self and creates individuals and communities focused on the love and majesty of God.

Worship is silence, it is music, both created and listened to; it is listening to and reflecting on God's word, hearing God's word taught; it is proclaiming faith, confessing sin, and being forgiven. Worship is entering into table fellowship with others, joining the great cloud of witnesses throughout history who have come to the table for a bit of bread and a sip of wine that is somehow body and blood, uniting us forever with the God we adore.

It is important to note what Worship is not. Worship is not about "meeting our needs". Worship is not about us finding a place that has the kind of music I prefer, the right kind of architecture, the right kind of preaching, or the right kind of people. True worship is actually the opposite of that - it is about getting ourselves out of the way in order to focus solely on God. It is vital that the Church provide a liturgical setting that does not create barriers to people's worship. Yet at its core, worship takes us out of our desire and into the heart of God.

Finally, we see that Worship transforms our hearts, souls, bodies and minds into redeemed and renewed people, sent out into the world to love and serve God. By becoming a new people, our lives become a complete act of worship.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual[b] worship." Romans 12:1