

COVENANT UMC IS CALLED TO 40 DAYS OF FASTING AND PRAYER LEADING UP TO GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008

Our Pastor is calling us to 40 days of prayer and fasting beginning March 15 for the General Conference. There are issues being considered that will effect all of us for years to come. We need Jesus Christ's Holy Spirit to direct everyone in these matters. The following was issued by the Host Committee in Central Texas.

A CALL TO PRAYER FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008

["To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."](#) *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Just as prayer is as essential to the Christian life as breath, so prayer is essential to our shared life together as we prepare for General Conference 2008.

We on the General Conference Hosting Committee Prayer Ministries Team invite you to pray daily for General Conference 2008 and for all the preparations and deliberations leading up to it so that in all that we do we are **"rooted and grounded in love."**

We as a church need the cleansing, healing and guiding breath of prayer

- * ***as we tend to all of the details in preparation for General Conference 2008,***
- * ***as the delegates prepare, deliberate and discern, and***
- * ***for every other large and small thing that goes into General Conference.***

Please join us. We pray that our work before and during General Conference 2008 may itself be an act of prayer and that we will be attentive through it all to God's Presence in the Holy Spirit. We pray that through it all, we may follow the lead of the Good Shepherd, Jesus the Christ, and that we are able to let go as we offer and entrust all things to the Holy One.



Why Worship?

Last month, this column addressed the spiritual discipline of celebration. It's a joy to practice that discipline.

There's another spiritual discipline that brings joy as well. It's worship. Why do we worship? Why should we worship? Who do we worship?

Richard J. Foster, the author of "Celebration of Discipline;" says "If the Lord is to be Lord, worship must have a priority in our lives."

We worship because we call ourselves Christians, or followers of Christ. And, the first commandment of Jesus is, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30).

"The divine priority is worship first, service second. Our lives are to be punctuated with praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Service flows out of worship. Service as a substitute for worship is idolatry. Activity is the enemy of adoration." I am "chief among sinners" when it comes to making myself "be still" instead of always being on the move.

Some weeks ago I woke up weary. I was weary in soul, mind, and body. In my private time with God that morning, I came across the verse, "Be still and know that I am Lord." (Psalm 46:10.)

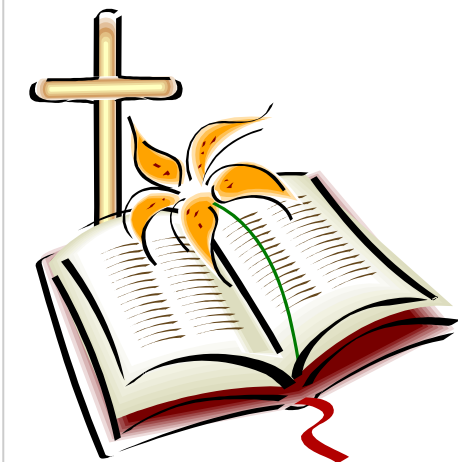
I decided to just meditate (another spiritual discipline) on that verse. I thought about intimacy (in a non-sexual way) and decided to spend special time with God by climbing up on my Father's lap, and just cuddling with him as a child would cuddle with her father.

(Romans 8:15) "You have received a spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out "Abba! Father!" In my mind's eye, I snuggled my face against

His big, strong chest. I felt His arms of love and tenderness wrap around me - giving me a feeling of great strength and safety and protection. It was an intimate moment.

It also refreshed me totally. After spending that time in private, intimate worship with God, I was renewed.

We worship a mighty God - God the Father (the Orchestrator), God the Son (the Intercessor), and God the Spirit (the Comforter and Guide). Just how powerful the experience of worship can be is described in a wonderful "Easter" story below:



The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church. The pastor rose and said, "Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us." The council accepted his plan and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.

May our worship be full of wonder this Easter month!

With His love and joy - Pastor Bec!

“If Not Me, Then Who?”

Rev. Nick Elliott, Executive Director of the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission for the Southeast Jurisdiction out of Atlanta, was our guest preacher in January 2008. He provided a very passionate and engaging message about “If Not Me, Then Who?” He offered a challenge to all of us that if we don’t go and serve, then who will. We tend to think “Oh, someone will do that.” but, in reality, there are times when no one else does “do that” or when the hands of many would make light work for one. Prayerfully consider where your hands might best be used in reaching out and serving His people.



THE RIPPLE EFFECT—THE STRESS OF BEING A CAREGIVER

Researchers are gaining a better understanding of the forces at work, realizing problems often start with the hospitalization of a spouse.

New findings suggest that having a husband or wife who needs to be admitted to a hospital with a serious illness poses health risks for the partner. The culprit: The stress and upheaval the partner experiences while enduring the hospitalization of an ailing spouse. "It's not like your spouse's sickness somehow magically makes you worse," said Dr. Nicholas A. Christakis, a professor of medical sociology at Harvard Medical School's Department of Health Care Policy. "We believe it works by imposing some kind of burden."

To unravel the connection, Christakis and Paul D. Allison, a University of Pennsylvania statistician, examined records of more than a half million couples who were enrolled in Medicare from 1993 through 2001. Their findings demonstrate the ripple effect of a spouse's hospitalization -- across various illnesses -- on the partner's health. "...illness in one person can affect the health, the mortality, of another person"

In the United States, at least 44 million adults, including spouses, provide care for a loved one, yet, few are adequately prepared to cope with the rigors of caring for or the toll it can take on their health.

Overall, Christakis' study found that a spouse's hospitalization boosted the risk of a man's death by 22 percent compared with the death of a spouse. A husband's hospitalization increased a woman's death risk by 16 percent.

A spouse's hospitalization for dementia proved most stressful, raising risk of death 22 percent for men and 28 percent for women, Christakis said. "In fact," he added, "we show that having a demented spouse is as bad for you as having a dead spouse."

Some diseases are deadly, but don't pose as much of a burden on the caregiver, be it physical, psychological, financial or some combination of these," he explained. "For caregivers, the findings should help give priority status to their own health needs."

Spousal family caregivers' risk of depression is six times greater than that of non-caregivers and they are less likely to reach out for help.

A caregiver should try and find a way to spread the work load.

Care giving is much more than a one-person job, especially when both the family caregiver and the care recipient are elderly. Often, spousal caregivers do not want to ask for or take help from their grown children, but that really is the first place we should all turn.

