

Welcome to 23 in 23!

A commitment to 23 days of prayer in 2023.

Prayer is communication and communion that connects us with God. You don't need to use big words or make it long when you talk with God. God just wants you to be yourself. In many ways, prayer is like talking to a best friend...you're truthful, willing to share a deeper part of yourself, and you're willing to listen as well. God is the greatest best friend one could ever have.

Having good intentions to pray and understanding the importance of prayer is not enough. Prayer should be something we look forward to doing and something that is woven throughout every aspect of our lives. It is our hope that *23 in 23* will help deepen your prayer life and your relationship with God! At the end of this booklet are several prayer guides to help you grow in your love and commitment to prayer.

Over the next several weeks we will focus on a different prayer topic. Each day will have a bible reading, short meditation, the day's topic and several sub-topics to help get you started. As you commit to daily prayer here are few things to consider ensuring your success...

Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he could be alone in prayer. ~ Mark 1:35 ~

SET A TIME

Jesus woke up early to pray. He was intentional about making time to be in prayer. Although we should be praying throughout the whole day, go ahead and set a specific time to be in prayer. Set an alarm, put in on your calendar, have your smart gadget send you a reminder. In any case, be intentional about praying each day.

FIND A PLACE

Jesus found a place where he would not be distracted. Find a place that works best for you. A place where you will not be distracted.

We look forward to seeing how God will grow in our lives, our church and our community over the next 23 days and in 2023!

Day 1

Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ~ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ~

Short Meditation: Experiencing God in gratitude is God's will for us, and prayer is a sacred means by which we achieve this experience—it has a transformative impact on our lives. Thankfulness is a powerful way to practice being attentive to God and others—being “other-centered”—

understanding that we are part of God's reality and not simply our own.

General Prayer Topic – **Thanksgiving**

Sub-topics:

- Thanksgiving for creation and life itself.
- Thanksgiving for the blessings of life.
- Thanksgiving for the relationships in your life.
- Thanksgiving for the forgiveness offered in Christ.

Day 2

Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God's glory. ~ Romans 5:1-2 ~

Short Meditation: Hope is the anticipated desire or outcome of the trust in God we call faith. It's not wishful thinking or a naïve sentiment, but it is a grace-filled optimism that God's promises for us will be fulfilled. Because we hope in God's future, we live those expectations today.

General Prayer Topic – **Hope**

Sub-topics:

- Hope for the helpless and destitute.
- Hope for a better future.
- Hope for love and kindness in the world.
- Hope for times of weakness.

Day 3

Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things. ~ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ~

Short Meditation: The family unit is like a learning lab where we get to test our ability to love. God-like loving is tested heavily with the family because they know us best—the good, the bad, and the ugly! Loving those that are closest to us allows us to hone a life-giving skill that can be shared with the world.

General Prayer Topic – **Family**

Subtopics:

- Spouse or significant other
- Children and/or siblings
- Parents
- Extended family
- Church family

Day 4

So, my child, draw your strength from the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ~ 2 Timothy 2:1 ~

Short Meditation: An old adage drawn from ideas of evolution is that “only the strong survive.” While there is truth to this saying, Jesus modeled a form of strength that was counter-intuitive in his time and ours. The Spirit fortifies us in life, and the greatest signs of that gift are when we act in service to others and maintain a sense of Christ-like humility.

General Prayer Topic – **Strength**

Subtopics:

- Strength to overcome trials and hardships
- Strength to turn to God in times of need.
- Strength to turn from sin
- Strength to share the Gospel

Day 5

First of all, then, I ask that requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be made for all people. Pray for kings and everyone who is in authority so that we can live a quiet and peaceful life in complete godliness and dignity. This is right and it pleases God our savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ~ 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Short meditation: In the ancient days, it was assumed that civic leaders were to model the tenets of faithfulness that most characterized God their sovereign—justice and mercy. When these foundational ideals were enacted, the table was set for everyone to live as God intended, “in complete godliness and dignity.”

General Prayer Topic – **Government**

Subtopics:

- World Leaders
- President & National Leaders
- State Leaders
- City Leaders

Day 6

If you stop trampling the Sabbath, stop doing whatever you want on my holy day, and consider the Sabbath a delight, sacred to the LORD, honored, and honor it instead of doing things your way, seeking what you want and doing business as usual, then you will take delight in the LORD. ~ Isaiah 58:13-14 ~

Short meditation: “Sabbath is an incubator for wisdom. When we allow the rush and pressure of our days to fall away, even for a short period of time, we are more able to discern the essential truth of what lies before us.” – Wayne Muller, *Sabbath*

General Prayer Topic – **Rest**

Subtopics:

- Personally taking time to rest and focus on the things of God.
- Rest for those who are overwhelmed and stressed by life.
- Rest for those with an anxious heart and mind.
- Rest in the assurance of God's love.

Day 7

The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him. ~ Colossians 3:15-17 ~

Short meditation: The Old Testament contains multiple references to the “assembly” of the faithful as those set apart by God. That same word is translated in the New Testament in Greek as *ekklesia*, and we know it in English as “church.” God recognizes us collectively as a people, chosen to be members of the body of Christ, and set apart to be agents of God's mission in the world.

General Prayer Topic – **Church**

Subtopics:

- General Church and Christ's presence to be known in the world
- For First Methodist's future growth and impact.
- People attending churches (First Methodist) will be transformed into the image of Christ.
- People who do not know Christ will be open and ready to receive Christ.

Day 8

He has told you, human one, what is good and what the LORD requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God. ~Micah 6:8~

Short meditation: Oftentimes we confuse God's justice with our own systems of laws and enforcement. However, God's justice is rooted in compassion. It always takes into account a sense of fairness, especially for those that society would typically marginalize.

General Prayer Topic – **Justice**

Subtopics:

- There to be an end to division, strife and war.
- Healing for the dissensions that divide us.
- Help for the helpless.
- We show mercy and love to all people.

Day 9

If any of you are suffering, they should pray. If any of you are happy, they should sing. If any of you are sick, they should call for the elders of the church, and the elders should pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. Prayer that comes from faith will heal the sick, for the Lord will restore them to health. And if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. For this reason, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful in what it can achieve. ~James 5:13-16~

Short meditation: God desires wholeness for all. Jesus demonstrates this reality repeatedly through his healing ministry. However, it wasn't just the physical ailments that Jesus paid attention to; he looked to mend all manner of "brokenness," including those who suffered heartbreak, social rifts, and loss of self. In each case, it was the peoples' trust—their faith—that led them to experience God's wholeness.

General Prayer Focus – **Healing**

Subtopics:

- Healing for the sick
- Healing for those dealing with grief and sorrow
- Healing for broken relationships
- Healing for the land and God's creation

Day 10

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ~Colossians 3:23-24~

Short meditation: Work is a gift of God. From the beginning, we were purposed to be caretakers of God's creation. As human beings, our role is to sanctify the material world with our own spiritual presence. When we see work as a blessing, it no longer defines us, but we define the work; and in the process we glorify God.

General Prayer Focus – **Work / School**

Subtopics:

- Employer (Administration)
- Co-workers (Teachers)
- Employees (Students)

Day 11

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. ~John 14:26-27~

Short meditation: A visible byproduct of the presence of the Holy Spirit is the mutuality and unification of the faithful. We call this state of being “peace.” It isn’t simply an absence of war or conflict, nor is it merely a feeling of serenity or quiet (although these may come). God’s peace is about wholeness, or *shalom*. When we pray for peace, we are asking for God to put things in order, the way they were always intended to be.

General Prayer Topic – **Peace**

Subtopics:

- Peace in the world
- Peace in our nation
- Peace in relationships
- Peace in your heart

Day 12

Some people brought children to Jesus so that he would place his hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded them. “Allow the children to come to me,” Jesus said. “Don’t forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children.” Then he blessed the children and went away from there. ~Matthew 19:13-15~

Short meditation: In biblical times, children were not seen as true people. Their utter dependence on their caregivers lessened their social value. In best cases, they were future workers and/or bearers of the family name; in worst cases they were nuisances subject to sale or merely discarded. In some ways and situations, the plight of children hasn’t shifted much.

General Prayer Topic – **Children**

Subtopics:

- Children who are homeless or orphaned.
- Children who are victimized by human trafficking.
- For any hindrances that don’t allow children to know the love of Christ.
- That children in general and specifically those of First Methodist will follow God and learn to trust Christ in every situation of life.

Day 13

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young. Instead, set an example for the believers through your speech, behavior, love, faith, and by being sexually pure. ~1 Timothy 4:12~

Short meditation: At least one-third of US adults under the age of 30 are religiously unaffiliated. That means that something is missing within the institutional church that young people find engaging. Many claim to be “spiritual” yet not “religious.” However, it is the faith community rooted in tradition that gives direction and vitality to the spiritual life. The body needs all its parts—young, old, and in-between—to function properly.

General Prayer Topic – **Students/Youth**

Subtopics:

- Healthy life choices for teenage and college ages students.
- Students would discover and live into their God given purpose.
- Students who feel isolated, lonely and depressed.
- First Methodist's Youth Ministry

Day 14

And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

~Hebrews 10:24-25~

Short meditation: The faith walk is not a solitary journey. In fact, Methodism's John Wesley thought it virtually impossible to live the Christian life outside of some form of accountability group. The collective experience and wisdom of the Body fortified by the Spirit serves to encourage, support, and sustain all the believers involved.

General Prayer Topic – **Small Groups / Sunday School**

Subtopics:

- Small group leaders
- Small groups are a safe place to experience Christ's transformation
- Small group participants...everyone will find a Life Group that provides community and accountability for Godly transformation.

Day 15

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.... ~Galatians 5:13~

Short meditation: "Prayer and community are always found together." This truth simply but powerfully summarizes what the prayer life is about. Our communication with God informs our minds and transforms our hearts. As a result, we are convicted to act as God acts, expressing love through and with community. Likewise that work, in whatever form it takes, creates the bases for our prayer life. It is a symbiotic relationship of love that ebbs and flows like eternal tides.

General Prayer Topic – **Missions / Out Reach**

Subtopics:

- First Methodist will grow in its commitment and ability to share the Gospel.
- First Methodist will have a significant Godly impact on those in need.
- First Methodist will cultivate relationships with other community leaders/organizations that will help meet the need of those in our community.
- Each person of First Methodist will use their gifts/talents to reach out with the love of Christ to all people.

Day 16

Now I encourage you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose. ~ 1 Corinthians 1:10~

Short meditation: Sometimes people confuse unity with uniformity. Instead, we should think of unity as having a clear eye on the common goal, with the community's synchronized push towards that end. It's like the Church as a consecrated boat crew heeding the call of their spiritual coxswain towards the finish line. Unity mimics God's own "Oneness," and its visibility in the world is a sure sign that Christ is at the core of the community. It is proof positive that love is at work, binding the faithful and fueling their life as a whole.

General Prayer Topic – **Unity**

Subtopics:

- Unity in the Christian church and growth as the body of Christ.
- First Methodist would be unified in its mission to share Christ.
- Our communities, nation and world would be unified in our common humanity and love for one another.

Day 17

Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your request to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. ~Philippians 4:6~

Short meditation: "Prayer is standing in the presence of God with the mind in the heart; that is at that point of our being where there are no divisions or distinctions and where we are totally one. There God's spirit dwells and there the great encounter takes place. There heart speaks to heart, because there we stand before the face of the Lord, all-seeing, within us." –Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*

General Prayer Topic – **Free Day (you pick the topic)**

Subtopics:

- What is on your heart and mind?

Day 18

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ~Ephesians 2:10~

Short meditation: Each of us has been influenced by innumerable souls from the past. Beyond our families of origin, teachers, friends, neighbors, and even strangers have left indelible marks on our lives. So too do we have a legacy. And while our concern as believers should be the faith walk before us (and not on its efficacy or outcomes), nevertheless we can't lose sight of the

impact we have on those with whom we come in contact, both voluntarily and otherwise.

General Prayer Topic – **Significance/Influence**

Subtopics:

- Those you influence.
- Ways in which you will add significance to others.
- The generations of people who will be impacted by your legacy.

Day 19

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age. ~Matthew 28:19-20~

Short meditation: We are a people called to be invitational. That call originates in God's invitation to us to take part in the Divine work in creation. Because of this mandate, we can define evangelism as the holistic initiation of persons into the transformational mission of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Spirit, and entrusted to the church. To this end, each of us is included in St. Francis' declaration to preach the gospel to all the world—and use words when necessary!

General Prayer Topic – **Evangelism**

Subtopics:

- First UMC will grow in its commitment and ability to share the Gospel.
- Each person of First Methodist will use their gifts/talents to reach out with the love of Christ to all people.
- I will intentionally show and speak about Christ's love to those who need God.

Day 20

Be Kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ. ~Ephesians 4:32~

Short meditation: Forgiveness and grace are the foundation of Christianity and what sets Christianity apart from any other religion. Forgiveness is not often easy—forgiving others or asking Christ to forgive us—yet it is the very reason Jesus gave his life on the cross. When we offer and receive forgiveness, we experience God's forgiveness more fully, and can enjoy relationships without being hindered by the hard feelings that come from holding a grudge.

General Prayer Topic – **Forgiveness**

Subtopics:

- Letting go of resentment and forgiving others
- Confessing sin and asking for forgiveness.

Day 21

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. ~Colossians 3:12-13~

Short meditation: Clothe yourself with Christ, in practical terms, means choosing to adopt Christ's qualities as your own in a permanent way that demonstrates you have been changed forever by knowing Jesus. The radical kindness of Jesus, including loving enemies, stands out to people and provokes them to ask why you would choose to live this way. What "clothes" are you wearing for Jesus?

General Prayer Topic – **Kindness**

Subtopics:

- Your heart will brim over with kindness
- Our church would be known for having the kindest people.
- Kindness amongst those who are divided and/or in conflict.

Day 22

I assure you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." ~John 6:47-48, 51~

Short meditation: Jesus is the Bread of Life who came down out of heaven to give life to the world. He sacrificed his physical body on the cross to gratify our spiritual hunger. Jesus completely satisfies every need we have in this life and for life eternal. How are you allowing Jesus to nourish your life?

General Prayer Topic – **Bread of Life**

Subtopics:

- Forgiveness in the ways you are looking to worldly things and relationships to satisfy your spiritual hunger.
- Inviting Jesus into the spaces and places of your life and the life of others that need Christ's nourishment.
- Gratitude for Jesus being the Bread of Life.

Day 23

So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you should do it all for God's glory. ~1 Corinthians 10:31~

Short meditation: Human beings were made for one singular purpose—to glorify God. We do this by living to our fullest potential and remaining true to our purpose. This indeed is why God comes to us in the Incarnate Christ; Jesus shows us what it means to be fully human. His lessons begin and end with desiring the Father's will to be our own. When we are aligned this way, anything we put to do—singing, dancing, washing dishes, reading, thinking, breathing—becomes an act of

glorifying God. And our lives become living prayer.

General Prayer Topic – **God's Glory**

Subtopics:

- Everything you do will be glorifying to God.
- Everything First United Methodist does will be glorifying to God.
- That as God is glorified more and more people will trust Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Awesome! What a great start to living a life of daily prayer. Thank you for being intentional in prayer and making a commitment to growing in your faith. As you continue to pray daily make a list of additional prayer topics. Here are few ideas...God's wisdom, courage to share your faith, specific people, clarity in decision making, and the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Keep praying! You can do it!!

PRAYER GUIDE

Types of Prayer

- **Blessing** – speaking words of God's blessing on people.
- **Confession** – telling God about where you have failed him and about the sins you have committed, and asking for forgiveness.
- **Contemplation** – listening to God and enjoying his presence, usually in meditation and silence
- **Desolation** – crying out in despair, pain, and the knowledge that there is no place else to turn but God.
- **Intercession** – praying specifically on behalf of other people
- **Petition** – asking God to do something for you or for others.
- **Healing** - Praying for the specific healing of a sickness or ailment.
- **Praise** – expressing how great God is.
- **Thankfulness** – being thankful for the ways God is at work in the world and in your life.
- **Transformation** – committing to change for, among other things, surrender to God's service, release of what troubles you, and forgiveness toward others.

Guides to Prayer

The secret of praying is praying. To help guide your prayer us the acronym A.C.T.S. or expound on a prayer that you already know.

A.C.T.S. (Spend time on each of the categories of A.C.T.S. as you pray.)

Adoration – worship or honor God as God. Giving God “credit” for being God.

Confession – Being real with God and admitting to sin. Asking and accepting forgiveness.

Thanksgiving – Seeing God at work in your life and the life of others and offer thanks.

Supplication – asking humbly and earnestly for your concerns and for the concerns of others.

Expounding (Expounding is taking a known prayer, usually a familiar one, and adding to it.)

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. *(God you are wonderful and holy...)*
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. *(Let me live in your will here on earth...)*

Give us this day our daily bread. *(Thank you for the many blessings of life. You know our needs...)*

And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. *(I've messed up and...)*

And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. *(Keep me from my temptations...)*
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. *(Everything is yours...)*

HELPFUL WAYS TO GROW IN PRAYER

Prayer is communication with God. People communicate in different ways. Continue to explore different ways to praying and find those that will enrich and deepen your communication with God.

- **Alarm / Trigger** – use an alarm clock, timer, or other trigger (bell at school, red lights, airplane, etc.), to be a short time of prayer.
- **Journal** – Use one page a day to write down your prayers. Helps keep prayers focused, opportunity to see God more clearly, is an encouragement for the future, and helps to sort out life.
- **Prayer List** – Listing prayers helps “track” them. Recall God’s faithfulness.
- **Track Prayer Request** - Brief Description of Request - Answer(s) to the Request
- **Prayer Time** – Make a specific time (and place) to pray.
- **Meditate** – Read a piece of Scripture and focus on God’s word. Empty out yourself and fill yourself with God.
- **Partner** – Find someone to pray with or someone to hold you accountable to praying.
- **Team** – Ask several people to be praying for you as you commit to growing in prayer. Consider finding a time for your team to meet together and pray.
- **Creative** – Put action to prayer. Pray while you dance or paint.

Remember:

- Prayer is a lifelong journey of growth.
- Be spontaneous and pray continually.
- Pray for one topic at a time.

PRAYER IDEAS

- **Burning Prayers** – Write your prayer of confession on paper. Burn the piece of paper and read 1 John 1:8-9 to close.
- **Prayer Chains** – Write your prayers on small sheets of paper and form them each day into paper chains. Hang the chain somewhere where you will see it. This is good for a family and use to talk about the strength that comes from prayers and family unity.
- **Sugar Cubes** – When you want to give something to God use this method. Take a sugar cube and a glass of water. Hold the sugar cube in your hand and pray to God the thing you would like to give up. “Transfer” your prayer to the cube and then put it into the water. It is now God’s and you have to let it go.
- **Candles** – Candles can be used in a number of ways: to symbolize the Holy Spirit, be a light to the world, hope in a time of darkness, etc. Light a candle while you pray.
- **Map** – Draw a map of the places God has taken you through prayer, or of the places you would like God to take you through prayer.
- **Penny in Shoe** – Place a penny in your shoe. Each time you feel the penny throughout the day say a little prayer.
- **Rock in Shoe** – Put a small rock in your shoe. After it has burdened you enough take it out, hold it and pray about the things that have burdened you. “Transfer” your prayers to the rock and then throw the rock as far as you can away from you.
- **Cooking** – Spend time cooking something. As you add each ingredient pray for a specific item you would like to see grow/transform/complete/etc. Once the cooking is completed know that God uses all kinds of things to make new things.
- **Round the Clock** – Commit to praying at the top of the hour for an entire day.
- **Without words** – Use some medium to express your prayers (paint, color, draw, dance, etc.) Read Romans 8:26-27 to help guide your prayer.
- **Blessing Bracelet** – Take beads and place them on a string. Each time you place a bead on the string thank God for a blessing in your life. After you have finished praying, tie the string around your wrist/neck and continue to be mindful of God’s blessings.
- **Prayer Walk** – Walk around an area that needs prayer. Kid’s room, business, bed, etc. and each time you make a lap pray for something specific.
- **God Is...** - Make a list of all the things God is and give thanks for those things.
- **Nature** – Find time to spend in nature. Give thanks to God for God’s creation and God’s continued work in creation.
- **Themes** – Take on a theme for the week and pray for that theme all week.
- **Everyday Things** – Pray while doing the everyday things. Brushing teeth, shower, driving to work, etc.