

CROSS & FLAME

MAY 2012

WPAUMC.ORG

Opening Ourselves to Grace

Many spiritual disciplines can strengthen our lives, but one that is easily practiced is praying the **Jesus Prayer**. It is grounded in the story of Blind Bartimaeus, who stands by the side of the road and cries, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" (Mark 10:47).

The blind man cries out to Jesus from the darkness of his existence, hoping, with a fervent power that overcomes hesitancy, that Jesus will hear and respond. People in Biblical times had an appreciation for the power of the spoken word that we have lost in our modern era. Prayer-filled spoken words grounded in ancient prayer practices can help to shape a stronger prayer life and in turn to shape us.

The **Jesus Prayer** is simple, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." We do not know exactly when the **Jesus Prayer** began as an ancient prayer practice, but it was very popular during the monastic era of the Eastern (Orthodox) Church. Dan Wolpert, in **Creating a Life with God, The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices**, emphasizes that this simple prayer practice can enrich prayer life, which helps to shape our discipleship. Practicing the **Jesus Prayer** is simple. Be disciplined in the practice until you feel God's presence distinctly surrounding you.



PRACTICING THE JESUS PRAYER

Decide how much time you want to spend in prayer. Begin with at least 15 minutes to start. The **Jesus Prayer** can be prayed anywhere at any time – as you walk, in your office, on the bus, late at night, early in the morning, during noontime, in or out of church.

Repetition should be continuous and rhythmic. Allow the words to flow into your being.

Here are the steps to repeat:

1. Repeat: "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."
2. Keep repeating even though your mind may wander.
3. Bring your thoughts back to the prayer as you orally repeat the words.
4. Give yourself time to sit in silence and solitude between rhythmic and spoken repetition of the **Jesus Prayer**.
5. Don't rush.
6. Appreciate the prayer so that the prayer has time to shape your thoughts and feelings.
7. When you have completed your time with the **Jesus Prayer**, give God thanks.
8. Close your time in silence, and just be.

–Rev. Rebecca Innerst,
Director of Discipleship & Spiritual Formation

BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER

Join United Methodists throughout Western Pennsylvania in studying these Bible passages from the Revised Common Lectionary and praying for these congregations and leaders.

MAY 6 - 12, 2012

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER-WHITE

READ: Acts 8:26-40; Psalm 22:25-31; 1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

PRAY FOR: † **Somerset: Bethany UMC**, Connellsville Dist., Barry K. Ritenour, pastor
† **Clarendon: Trinity/Tiona UMCs**, Kane Dist., Martin P. Reynolds, pastor
† **Erie: Asbury UMC**, Erie-Meadville Dist., Daniel A. Owen, pastor
† **Punxsutawney: First UMC**, Indiana Dist., James N. Pond, pastor
† **Springdale UMC**, Butler Dist., Wayne Schar, pastor
† **Homewood/Volant UMCs**, Butler Dist., Gary Hilton, pastor

MAY 13 - 19, 2012

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER-WHITE MOTHER'S DAY

READ: Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

PRAY FOR: † **Saint Michael UMC**, Johnstown Dist., David J. Butler, pastor
† **Pittsburgh: First UMC**, Pittsburgh Dist., Robert A. Wilson, pastor
† **Somerset: Beulah UMC**, Connellsville Dist., Thomas E. Brown, pastor
† **Clarks Mills UMC**, Franklin Dist., Dayton D. Mix, pastor
† **Sheakleyville Charge**, Franklin Dist., Stephen M. Lamb, pastor
† **Warren: First UMC**, Kane Dist., Jeffrey D. Sterling, pastor

MAY 20 - 26, 2012

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER/ASCENSION SUNDAY-WHITE

READ: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

PRAY FOR: † **Holiday Park UMC**, Greensburg Dist., Joel S. Garrett, pastor
† **Hillside UMC**, Greensburg Dist., Raymond P. Kerr, pastor
† **Walter Chapel/Millerstown UMCs**, Butler Dist., Darlene K. Ryniec, pastor
† **New Kensington UMC**, Greensburg Dist., Bramwell Kjellgren, pastor
† **Summerville/Kingsville UMCs**, Indiana Dist., William P. Saxman, pastor
† **Faithful Followers Charge**, Indiana Dist., Leslie A. Hutchins, pastor

MAY 27 - JUNE 2, 2012

PENTECOST-RED OR WHITE

READ: Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

PRAY FOR: † **Pittsburgh: Crafton UMC**, Pittsburgh Dist., Dianne D. Glave, pastor
† **Conneaut Lake: Trinity UMC**, Erie-Meadville Dist., Jay F. Sterling, pastor
† **Wrights UMC/Edwards Chapel**, Washington Dist., Thomas E. Hoeke, pastor
† **Johnstown: Bethany UMC**, Johnstown Dist., Patricia T. Cleary, pastor
† **Boston/Elizabeth UMCs**, Washington Dist., Diane E. M. Gobbel, pastor
† **Rimersburg/Lawsonham UMCs**, Franklin Dist., Brock R. Beveridge, pastor