

Worship Brainstorming

“Help, Thanks, Wow!” - Three Essential Prayers

Mon., October 18, 2021 at LHUMC

12:00 p.m. Potluck Lunch

12:45-3:00 p.m. Brainstorming for Worship

November 7-21, 2021

The worship brainstorming for 1 series (3 weeks) will be held at church. Members of all ages and backgrounds are invited to participate in the one-time commitment. The ideas generated at the brainstorming are used in worship.

We will have a potluck at 12:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share. Brainstorming is from 12:45-3:00 p.m. We'll gather at the back of the sanctuary. Safety protocols will be the same as at church (masks are recommended for those who are not fully vaccinated).

Information is available at church and on our website. Please pick up this brainstorming packet at church or find it online, read the Scripture readings and Pastor Mary's message synopses, and preview videos before we gather. Please RSVP to Karen Booth at kwbooth@comcast.net, 231-798-8431, or 231-557-1069 or by signing up at church.

2021 marks two important anniversaries for LHUMC:

1. 65 years since charter (April 22, 1956)
2. 5 years since merger with Lakeside UMC (June 2016)

Social Justice Issue - November: Those who are incarcerated and those who work in correctional facilities (Brad Dean to speak)

Our 2021 theme, “**Still Blessed,**” reminds us to be focus on gratitude. Prayer is a gift and a tool for us to stay connected to God through honest, heartfelt, authentic prayer.

2021 theme connection: Prayer connects us to God and reminds us that we are blessed.

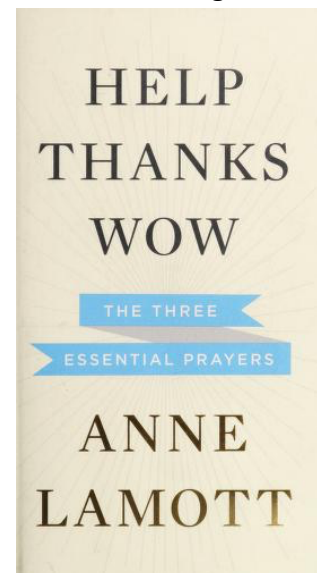
Key word: Remember

Synopsis: Author Anne Lamott writes about the three simple prayers essential to coming through tough times, difficult days, and the hardships of daily life. It is these three prayers – asking for assistance from a higher power, appreciating what we have that is good, and feeling awe at the world around us – that can get us through the day and show us the way forward.

Key scripture: I Thessalonians 5: 16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks *in* all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Ideas:



- How does this series connect to our practice of sharing God moments?
- How does prayer connect to spiritual formation and transformation?
- Invite someone to write a prayer for each week based on the theme. (Dirk Fuller, Nancy Robertson)
- Encourage people to read the book along with the series.
- Host prayer service each week in November.
- Encourage use of prayer journals.
- Set up prayer stations for each week's theme.

Lamott's words on prayer:

"Prayer means that, in some unique way, we believe we're invited into a relationship with someone who hears us when we speak in silence."

"Prayer is talking to something or anything with which we seek union, even if we are bitter or insane or broken... Prayer is taking a chance that against all odds and past history, we are loved and chosen, and do not have to get it together before we show up. The opposite may be true: We may not be able to get it together until after we show up in such miserable shape."

"Light reveals us to ourselves, which is not always so great if you find yourself in a big disgusting mess, possibly of your own creation. But like sunflowers we turn toward light... And in this light, we can see beyond shadow and illusion to something beyond our modest receptors, to what is way beyond us, and deep inside."

"But where do we even start on the daily walk of restoration and awakening? We start where we are."

Resources: E-mail from congregant from Feb 2021:

So I started to wonder what is the difference between a wish, a hope, and a prayer. I certainly was wishing and hoping for a good outcome today...But I prayed for God's wisdom and guidance for my caregivers today. They were wonderful.

A wish seems to be something "cheap." Like: I wish I will win the lotto, or I wish that something else good happens randomly.

A hope seems to be something that people of faith or those that are searching for faith may already realize that there is a higher level of power above them. I can easily identify with them.

A prayer seems to already assume that the believer is good with the belief of God and his presence in our lives. Something that I constantly am looking for...

Wishes, Hopes, or Promises? By Jaco J. Hamman

<https://reflections.yale.edu/article/spirit-and-politics-finding-our-way/wishes-hopes-or-promises>

From author Sarah Bessey:

What is your "help" prayer? Anything hard or scary or overwhelming going on? This is a good place to be honest - your hard is hard, you don't have to play the hardship Olympics. We'll pray with or for you or just stand as witness to your stress over back to school, lost

income, sad kids, political grief, the situation in Beirut, lament over systemic injustice, a broken heart, or whatever. If you're sad or angry or worried, we can bear witness to it.

What is your “thanks?” Want to shout out a teacher going above and beyond? a healthcare worker, public health official, or neighbour? A sunset? A partner or a friend who showed up for you? A check that showed up at the right time? A moment of grace? A sense of restoration? An exhale? Who or what are you grateful for right now?

What is your “wow” moment? Give a few words to the “wow” moments even in the midst of the anxiety or grief or worry. Where or how are you seeing God surprise you right now? The laugh of your kid? a school board making a hard call? someone dancing in the grocery store aisle? a sunrise? What is something that makes you say “wow” in that awed voice you keep reserved for such moments of wonder.

Anne Lamott Distills Prayer Into 'Help, Thanks, Wow'

<https://www.npr.org/2012/11/19/164814269/anne-lamott-distills-prayer-into-help-thanks-wow>

Music:

Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire (UMH 492 - sung to tune of *Amazing Grace*)

Standing in the Need of Prayer (UMH 352)

Sweet Hour of Prayer (UMH 496)

Take Time to Be Holy (UMH 395)

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (FWS 2193)

O Lord, Hear My Prayer (FWS 2200)

Visuals: praying hands

Media:

- “Prayer. It’s Easier than You Think.” Length: 1:43. Cost: \$19.98. Web license: Probably not. Prayer isn’t supposed to be difficult. It’s not about praying the perfect prayer, talking loudly or where you pray. It’s about talking to your best friend. This video shows just how simple prayer really is. <https://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/41573/prayer-its-easier-than-you-think>
- “Prayer Intro.” Length: 2:35. Cost: We own it. Never used. Web license: Yes. Use this beautifully crafted intro to set up a message on prayer. <https://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/14720/prayer-intro>
- “Without Prayer.” Length: 1:25. Cost: \$16.00. Web license: Yes. Use this video to go beyond the duty and guilt often associated with prayer and drive home the truth that without prayer we can’t see and understand life clearly. <https://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/54119/without-prayer>

November 7, 2021: “Help - Needed and Wanted” – DST ends

Scripture: Psalm 46, 121 (to be used in liturgy)

Scripture: Psalm 40: 11-17 (VOICE)

Please, Eternal One, don't hold back

Your kind ways from me.

I need Your strong love and truth

to *stand watch over me and* keep me from harm.

¹² Right now *I can't see because* I am surrounded by troubles;

my sins *and shortcomings* have caught up to me,

so I am swimming in darkness.

Like the hairs on my head, there are too many to count,

so my heart deserts me.

¹³ O Eternal One, please rescue me.

O Eternal One, hurry; I need Your help.

¹⁴ May those who are trying to destroy me

be humiliated and ashamed instead;

May those who want to ruin my reputation

be cut off and embarrassed.

¹⁵ May those *who try to catch me off guard,*

those who look at me and say, "*Aha, we've trapped you,*"

be caught in their own shame instead.

¹⁶ But may all who look for You

discover true joy and happiness in You;

May those who cherish how You save them

always say, "O Eternal One, You are great *and are first in our hearts.*"

¹⁷ Meanwhile, I am empty and need so much,

but *I know* the Lord is thinking of me.

You are my help; only You can save me, my True God.

Please hurry.

Scripture: Matthew 26: 36-39 (NIV)

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Synopsis: "O God, help!" is a cry of faith and hope - and an admission that we don't have control over everything. Our prayers of petition - asking God to help - come out of our experience of God's faithfulness in the past and belief that God is at work for good.

Felt need: To admit that we need God's help and that there's a lot we don't control

Visuals:

Hands-on item: God box – a place to put a note handing over problems to God

Activity: Holy Communion

Media possibilities:

- “Be Still” video based on Psalm 46
- “Lord, I Need You.” Length: 3:25. Cost: \$19.99. Every one of us needs God. This video reminds us that every hour of every day, we need God. Features the Matt Maher song, “Lord, I Need You,” performed by Marcy Priest. <https://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/44416/lord-i-need-you>

Music:

Worship Leader:

Lamott’s words on HELP:

“Most good, honest prayers remind me that I am not in charge, that I cannot fix anything, and that I open myself to being helped by something, some force, some friends, some *something*.”

“Sometimes circumstances conspire to remind us or even let us glimpse how thin the membrane is between here and there, between birth and the grave, between the human and the divine.”

“Life unspools in cycles, some lovely, some painful, but in no predictable order.”

November 14, 2021: “Thanks - for Everything”

Scripture: Psalms 34, 95, 100, 103, 105 (to be used in liturgy)

Scripture: Isaiah 12: 1-6 (MSG)

And you will say in that day,

“I thank you, GOD.

You were angry

but your anger wasn’t forever.

You withdrew your anger

and moved in and comforted me.

² “Yes, indeed—God is my salvation.

I trust, I won’t be afraid.

GOD—yes GOD!—is my strength and song,

best of all, my salvation!”

³⁻⁴ Joyfully you’ll pull up buckets of water

from the wells of salvation.

And as you do it, you’ll say,

“Give thanks to GOD.

Call out his name.

Ask him anything!

Shout to the nations, tell them what he’s done,

spread the news of his great reputation!

⁵⁻⁶ “Sing praise-songs to God. He’s done it all!
Let the whole earth know what he’s done!
Raise the roof! Sing your hearts out, O Zion!
The Greatest lives among you: The Holy of Israel.”

Scripture: Philippians 4: 4-9 (NIV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Synopsis: So many of our prayers center on asking God for help, but we ignore the power of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving should be a natural response to God’s grace and love in our lives. Prayers of thanksgiving also cultivate gratitude in us, which offers needed perspective for every day.

Felt need: To reclaim the importance of gratitude and thanksgiving in our prayer life

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- LHUMC version of Psalm 34
- “Thankful.” Length: 1:37. Cost: \$18.00. Web license: Yes. A fun video that is just a prayer of thankfulness. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/41443/thankful>
- “Thankful.” Length: 2:00. Cost: \$19.99. Web license: Yes. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reminds us to give thanks in all circumstances. Not just on the mountain tops of our lives, but in every season and at every time. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/79588/thankful>
- “Give Thanks in Everything.” Length: 2:31. Cost: Free with subscription. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 commands us to give thanks in everything; for this is the will of God. It is easy to give thanks when life is running smooth. However, the command is not to give thanks only when things are easy but we are to give thanks in everything. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/62647/give-thanks-in-everything>
- “Thankful Now.” Length: 1:3. Cost: Free with subscription. It doesn’t matter what stage of life we find ourselves in, there is always the danger of wasting your whole life waiting for what come next. Then one day you wake up and realize you never really lived. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/41575/thankful-now>

- “Thankful People.” Length: 2:07. Cost: Free with subscription. All of us have a tendency to take for granted the small things in life. We focus on the things we want instead of the incredible ways that God has blessed us. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/41982/thankful-people>

Music:

Worship Leader:

Lamott’s words on THANKS:

“And at some point, we cast our eyes to the beautiful skies, above all the crap we’re wallowing in, and we whisper, ‘Thank you.’”

“Gratitude begins in our hearts and then dovetails into behavior. It almost always makes you willing to be of service, which is where the joy resides.”

“What a great scam, to have gotten people of such extreme quality and loyalty to think you are stuck with them.”

“You breathe in gratitude, and you breathe it out, too.”

“When we go from rashy and clenched to grateful, we sometimes get to note the experience of grace, in knowing that we could not have gotten ourselves from where we were stuck, in hate or self-righteousness or self-loathing (which are the same thing), to freedom. The movement of grace in our lives toward freedom is the mystery.”

November 21, 2021: “Wow!” (Wonder and Awe)

Bishop David Bard preaching

Scripture: Psalm 29 (to be used for liturgy)

Other possibilities: Isaiah 6:1-8; Exodus 3:4-6; Revelation 4:8-11

Synopsis:

Felt need: To

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities: “I Stand in Awe.” Length: 1:09. Cost: \$19.99. God is awe inspiring in every way. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/64500/i-stand-in-awe>

Music: How Great Thou Art (UMH 77), Holy Ground (FWS 2272)

Worship Leader:

Lamott’s words on WOW:

“Poetry is the official palace language of Wow.”

“When we are stunned to the place beyond words, we’re finally starting to get somewhere... when an aspect of life takes us away from being able to chip away at something until it’s down to a manageable size and then to file it nicely away, when all we can say in response is ‘Wow,’ that’s a prayer.”

“Love falls to earth, rises from the ground, pools around the afflicted. Love pulls people back to their feet. Bodies and souls are fed. Bones and lives heal. New blades of grass grow from charred soil. The sun rises.”

“Wonder takes our breath away, and makes room for new breath.”

“Awe is why we are here. And this state is the prayer: ‘Wow.’”

“Astonishing material and revelation appear in our lives all the time. Let it be. Unto us, so much is given. We just have to be open for business.”

“We are saved by memories of love and beauty—maybe there’s more of that to come, if we keep on keeping on.”