

Worship Brainstorming Summary

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

Mon., October 18, 2021 at LHUMC

November 7-21, 2021

Members present: Vicki Zuker, Betty Kinney, Barb Gripton, Diane Thompson, Pastor Mary, Dave Booth, Jean Kelly, Rose Emmons, Carole Koch, Karen Booth

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

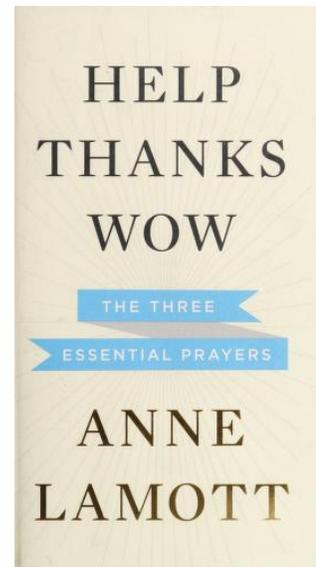
Synopsis: Author Anne Lamott writes about the three simple prayers essential to coming through tough times, difficult days, and the hardships of daily life. It is these three prayers – asking for assistance from a higher power, appreciating what we have that is good, and feeling awe at the world around 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. **Note:** Rose Emmons volunteered to do this. Vicki offered to help. Additional ideas: Mirror, rocks in water, words, nail paper to cross, dissolving paper or ink, wind chime. See pictures from the 2013 Lord’s Prayer series at <https://lakeharborumc.org/2021/10/october-18-2021-worship-brainstorming/>.



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 (from Canada – hence the spelling for neighbour):

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, praying hands emoji (related article

<http://bravester.com/what-does-the-praying-hands-emoji-really-mean/>)

Sanctuary:

- HELP and THANKS on the ledge.
- Larger letters for WOW hanging below the ledge.
- Prayer stations: See bottom of page 1, above.



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> **Discussion points:** This is our favorite. It speaks to the current generation, “other forms” of prayer – not necessarily just spoken - and shows how simple and honest prayer can/should be.
- “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> **Discussion points:** Feels a bit long. Like the graphics and content. Find the music a bit jarring, maybe because so many prayers are laments.
- “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> **Discussion points:** Like this one too.

General discussion points: 1) Pastor Mary gets questions from people regarding prayer quite frequently. How do I do it? Am I using the right words? 2) There is no question whether God knows our needs and prayers. He does. Are we aware? Are we willing to be honest? There are many examples of Jesus asking, “What do you want me to do for you?” Naming that

want is a form of prayer. 3) There seems to be a good deal of conflict over “certainties” within our faith and Christianity in general, especially in regards to human sexuality. Some differences are theological. How can people be so sure of so much? As we get older, we realize just how much we don’t know (wisdom). 4) Wow: We seem to have lost the sense of mystery inherent in faith. Think of the Book of Job when God questioned Job about details of creation. 5) Pastor Mary will poll FaceBook friends about their specific help, thanks, wow prayers.

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.

Pastor Mary likes the VOICE translation and would like someone else to read this aloud in worship.
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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: Pastor Mary would like a very, very large God box ready onstage for this Sunday.

Hands-on item: God box – a place to put a note handing over problems to God (see p. 36-37 of the book). **Related article:** <http://www.dailyword.com/what-god-box> **Discussion:** We like this. Education has small boxes and have used the for A Night in Bethlehem. We can order more. Some examples are shown below.

- Kraft Cotton Fill Jewelry Box #32 (left), case of 100 for \$37.50 from Amazon
- White Cotton Filled Paper Box (right), 3.25” w x 2.25” d x 1” h, pkg of 100 for \$27.50 from JPI Display



Activity: Holy Communion

Media possibilities:

- “Be Still” video based on Psalm 46:10. Length: 1:55. Cost: We own it. Web license: Yes. <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/be-still> **Discussion points:** We are using this on October 24.
- “Lord, I Need You.” Length: 3:25. Cost: \$19.99. Web license: **Yes**. 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. **Discussion points:** We didn’t watch this together but it is worth doing so. <https://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/44416/lord-i-need-you>

Music: Matt Maher’s “I Need You”

Worship Leader: _____ (9:00 am); Brad Hilleary (11:00 am)

Discussion points: 1) How willing are we to ask for help? Most of us answered, “not very much.” We are more than willing to ask to help others. Related examples: Guys asking for directions. Reading the owner’s manual or other directions. 2) Do we think God can help? Do we question whether He will actually help if we ask? 3) Praying for God’s will is hard and leaves us vulnerable. Example: Praying that God is compassionate and loving towards our enemies. 4) Being open to grace is transformative. Jean’s story: Jean’s sister had invited family over. She didn’t do the shopping so Jean ended up the store with her mom, pushing the shopping cart with one hand and her mother’s wheelchair with the other. Someone noticed her struggle and offered to take either the shopping cart or her mom out to the car through the snowy parking lot. Jean was overwhelmed – in a good way. 5) Another Jean

story: During a particularly tough season at work, Jean would pray for help to make it through the day as she walked from her car into work. 6) Why do we hate feeling so vulnerable? Do we think we should be stronger or more capable? Will people see our weaknesses? Or are we afraid of being disappointed yet again? 7) Idea for a prayer station: Write help prayers on paper that dissolves. 8) There is a story circulating on FaceBook about a grandfather and grandson who come across a bee hive. They opened it to find a few dying bees. The grandson asked if it would be more merciful to take the dying bees from the hive and put them out of their misery. When they removed the dying bees, some helper bees followed, and cleaned up their dying friends, restoring their health.

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 - in 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!

#2030 "The First
Song of Isaiah"
is based on
Isaiah 12: 2-6

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: Gratitude or blessings jar. Something to give to someone else as a thank you or token of appreciation.

Activity: Write things for which we are grateful on old school “spelling paper.” Collect the papers. Connect them with tape to form a chain (or end-to-end to form one very long skinny paper). Display the finished product in the sanctuary.

Media possibilities:

- LHUMC version of Psalm 34. **Discussion:** Use this.
- “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: #2030 “The First Song of Isaiah”; #2036 “give Thanks”

Worship Leader: _____ (9:00 am); _____ (11:00 am)

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.”

Discussion points: 1) Social media sites promote November as a month to give thanks (and post those thanks) every day. Why is giving thanks limited to November? 2) Jan Justus includes “blessed and grateful” in her prayers (and living). That phrase has changed many people’s attitudes for the better. 3) Pastor Mary has noticed how people who have suffered the most have been the most grateful. Example: A woman was left with three small children after her husband was hit by a train. She was always thankful that God walked with her as she raised the kids on her own. 4) Maxine Jolman is currently under Hospice care. Her husband of 70+ years, John, is still by her side. Pastor Mary asked them about the secret to a long marriage. She said, “you gotta give and take.” He said, “I agree with her.” 5) Thanksgiving seems to be the most underappreciated holiday, set squarely between the more commercial holidays of Halloween and Christmas. Several of us noted that it is our favorite holiday, simply because it is more “worshipful” than others. 6) Dealing with people who have no gratitude is soul sucking. 7) God’s grace is at work in everyone, something Pastor Mary reminds herself of when she is asked to do a funeral for someone she doesn’t know and finds that the deceased relatives don’t necessarily have many fond memories or good things to say. On a related note: Jean said the Methodist Church was called upon for funerals and weddings for the unchurched in the town where she grew up. 8) Vicki noted

that feelings follow thoughts, something recalled when she read Lamott's quote, "Gratitude begins in our hearts and then dovetails into behavior...." It also reminded her of James connection between faith and good works.

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> **Discussion points:** We did not watch this together, but it is worth doing so.

Music: How Great Thou Art (UMH 77), Holy Ground (FWS 2272); #3034 "God of Wonders"

Worship Leader: Dave Lorenz (9:00 am); Chris Beaudoin (11:00 am)

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."

Discussion points: 1) Keelen Dean's star word was WOW. 2) Pastor Mary had a wow moment in Florida on an airboat in Everglades. It was just beautiful. 3) Where/when are we awed? See the beauty of the natural world. Being in community with family or friends. In music/melodies/concerts. At Unity Christian Music Festival. Singing "The Blessing" in worship. In the midst of a cancer journey. 4) Why do we seem to have lost our sense of wonder in our world? In our faith? Does tech play a role?