

“I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.” Ephesians 1:16

One of the first things I remember about John Wesley, the unintentional founder of our faith, was that he grew up in a home where prayer was held in great regard. I knew this because I had read about one of his mother Susanna’s habits. There were multiple times a day when she would pull her apron over her face and she would enter into prayer. During this time the children knew not to disturb her. She was the mother of between 17 and 19 children, 10 of which survived. John and Charles Wesley (writer of many of our hymn’s lyrics) were two of those 10 children. Both young men grew to value the power of prayer.

Sharon Glasgow states that “When Susanna was young, she promised the Lord that for every hour she spent in entertainment, she would give the same to Him in prayer and in the Word.” The only problem was that as a mother of so many living in poverty and doing the schooling herself at home (some of you have a whole new experience of this struggle) and all the farm chores there was no time for entertainment so she altered her agreement with God settling on two hours in prayer! Mind you that is what she settled on—she wanted more. And in order to get those hours of prayer in she devised a system telling her children that whenever they saw her with her apron over her head, they would know that she was in prayer and they were not to disturb her.

When John was older, he wrote a letter to Miss March (3-29-1760) and said that prayer “is the grand means of drawing near to God.” In his New Testament notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:16 he stated that prayer is “the breath of our spiritual life.” In fact, he felt so strongly about prayer that he stated in his sermon entitled “The Wilderness State” that it was the “neglect of prayer” that is the most common reason people lose their faith.

During this time of isolation and social distancing there is One to whom we can draw closer. We do not need to meet in a fancy building (don’t get me wrong—I can’t wait for that day) because no matter where we are **we are the church** and our spiritual growth can and will continue if we take seriously the power and the spiritual enrichment that can be found in prayer. I am so grateful for the way you already demonstrate your understanding of the truth as you pray for one another. I am grateful for our prayer committee that is willing to intercede in prayer on our behalf. And I am so grateful for the many opportunities I have to pray with you all as we seek to be God’s family of faith appointed here to Franklin United Methodist. John Wesley understood that praying for others was an act of love.

In fact, I recall that at the end of Jesus’ life he spent much of it in prayer. Praying with and for his disciples. And on the cross Jesus even entered into prayer asking God to forgive the people because they did not know what they were doing.

So, as you sit in your homes, or in your backyard, you can grow and deepen your spiritual life through prayer and in the process we will be strengthening our family of faith in preparation for returning to worship together.

Oh, and one more thing, just before Jesus was arrested, he prayed for you and me “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As You, Father, are in me and I am in You, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that You sent me.”
John 17:20-21