



PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD

 We are One in Christ

DESERT SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE
August 13-19, 2017 • dscumc.org/praying-way-forward

Daily meditations, images, and a prayer schedule for the Conference-wide week of prayer for the work of the Commission on a Way Forward and the future of The United Methodist Church are available for download and repurposing at www.dscumc.org/praying-way-forward. Engage the online community by sharing the corresponding social media graphic, a prayer, including #prayingourwayforward or #umcprays, and challenging your online friends to post a photo of their reflection on the word of the day. Ask them to include a message or prayer on their own insights from the scripture. What else can you do to instigate prayer in your church community?



DAY 1 - OPENING

- **Scripture:** Proverbs 2:1-5
- **Questions:** What is the benefit of being open to God and others in our spiritual journey? At what times of your life has God called you to be open? What does it mean for the United Methodist Church to have “open hearts, open minds, and open doors”?
- **Prayer:** Loving God, in a world of change you placed eternity in our hearts and gave us the power to discern good from evil. Grant us sincerity, that we may persistently seek the things that endure and refuse those which perish. That, amid things vanishing and deceptive, we may be open to see the truth steadily, follow the light faithfully, and grow ever richer in that love which is the life of all people; through Jesus Christ, our savior. Amen. (Adapted from “For Discernment,” United Methodist Book of Worship, #510.)
- **Image:** Person with open arms.

DAY 2 - SEARCHING

- **Scripture:** Psalm 139:1, 23, Acts 17:26-28
- **Questions:** Searching surrounds us: smart phones searching for signal, "search engines" guide our internet quests, we search for our keys and our life purpose, we pray for search parties out to rescue and recover. What are ways that you are searching? What searches are you sharing with others?

What does it mean that all people are searching for God and living and being in God at the same time? What search is God calling you to and how might that search require trust, compassion, relationship, authenticity, boldness, and collaboration?

- **Prayer:** God of quest and request, your Life-giving Word draws us into the mysteries of this world, the unknown journeys of open hearts, open minds, and open doors. Teach us to ask, to knock, and to search in a way that keeps us open to wonder so that we might find you in all that lives and moves and has being. Amen.
- **Image:** Google search.

DAY 3 - LISTENING

- **Scripture:** Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 6:33, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 33:4
- **Questions:** Do you truly listen to others or are you preparing how you will answer them? Do you slow yourself down enough to hear God's direction and guidance? What is stopping you from truly listening to each other and God?
- **Prayer:** Teach me to listen, O God, to all as I engage in conversations with others and You. Help me to be aware of the message spoken whether the words are compassionate or hostile. May the Holy Spirit help me to accept each word as a truth that I must hear. Slow me from judgment, but move me to acceptance. Teach me, O God, to truly listen. Amen.
- **Image:** Crowd of people.

DAY 4 - UNDERSTANDING

- **Scripture:** Matthew 13:23
- **Questions:** When we listen, do we seek to understand, especially those different than ourselves. Understanding is truly an expression of Love for the other person. When was the last time we talked with someone who's life was different than ours and actually understood their situation or opinion? This week, look for opportunities to engage with someone different than yourself, and start up a discussion. Listen to their words, and understand where they are. Understanding others is a powerful way to plant God's seeds of Love.
- **Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, grant me the gift of understanding. Help me to understand the feelings of others, the desires of others, the goals of others. At the same time, help me to understand myself in my actions and reactions. Widen my vision beyond my small world to embrace with knowledge and love the worlds of others. Help me, Lord, to always see you at work in my own life and the lives of others. Bless me with insight, acceptance, and love tempered by you who are all things to all people. Help me to understand, Lord. Amen. (n.d. Retrieved from <https://praisehouston.com/4636194/minute-meditation-prayer-to-understand-others>)
- **Image:** Puzzle pieces fitting together.

DAY 5 - REACHING OUT

- **Scripture:** Revelation 3:20
- **Question:** Are you reaching? Are you reaching for God in all that you do? Do you feel God reaching for you?
- **Prayer:** Our heavenly Father, I am reaching out to you to guide me and show me the path. Take my hand Lord and lead me to the light of your love. Help me reach to you and others and share that meal with all who knock at my door. Amen!
- **Image:** Open hand reaching.

DAY 6 - EMBRACING

- **Scripture:** Romans 12:15-16a; 1Corinthians 12: 25b-26
- **Question:** How can we possibly benefit from embracing, from putting our arms around another and feeling their arms around us? What can we lose when we enter into this act? Are there different ways to embrace?
- **Prayer:** When we hesitate to get close; draw us nearer. Help us respect one another's vulnerabilities when we put up walls and keep others out. When understanding seems impossible; remind us all things are possible with you. When love feels too painful, remind us that we are better having loved than never at all. Above all, O God, strengthen us to embrace one another with dignity and appreciation. Amen.
- **Image:** Celebratory sports hug.

DAY 7 - TRANSFORMING

- **Scripture:** Matthew 7:12, John 13:30
- **Question:** When was a time someone showed you love in a way that impacted how you live? What does love look like as you pray for the work of the Commission on the Way Forward? How will you be an instrument of that type of love this week?
- **Prayer:** God of grace and God of glory, let your love be so present in all that I do and say, in how I live each day, that people cannot help but see you. Let your love transform us into the church you desire. Then enable us to transform the world with the power of love. Make us one, Lord, united in mission, grace, and love. Amen.
- **Image:** Sapling growing.