

Four ways to revive prayer ministries

One can follow many different paths to reviving congregational prayer ministries. The key is to make prayer a priority and to begin.

The Rev. Michael Henderson of Cayce (S.C.) United Methodist Church said, "There has never been a revival or a reformation or re-anything that was not firmly bound in prayer."

Here are some things your congregation can do to revive prayer:

1. Set aside the lectionary for a period to preach specifically on prayer.

Dedicate several weeks to speaking and listening to God. During these weeks, pray for your community and world, in addition to congregants and their needs. Include religious and political leaders serving locally and globally. Invite the community to participate by posting prayers on your church marquee.

2. Connect willing participants with a prayer partner.

Prayer partners can meet in person or talk on the phone to pray. This encourages partners to become good friends and accountability partners. Prayer partners could also arrive before Sunday services, pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit and continue to pray throughout worship.

3. Create an altar ministry.

During worship, invite people to come forward for prayer. The Rev. Jeff Kersey has used this method to re-energize his congregation at Mount Horeb United Methodist Church in Lexington, S.C. The church has grown from 250 to 2,600 members since becoming intentional about prayer.

4. Create prayer spaces and rituals.

The altar may feature a Bible, cross, candle or other sacred object. Children's altars should be safe—no candles, glass or sharp objects.

People who are artistic and energetic may enjoy spaces that allow for movement, such as talking, singing or dancing. Others may prefer quiet activities, such as walking, writing or memorizing Bible verses.

— United Methodist Communications

Bishop Lewis released statement at faith leader conference

A press conference was held by faith leaders at the General Assembly Building in Richmond on Wednesday, Feb. 22. Its purpose was to address various immigration issues, particularly immigrants' rights, from the perspective of the various faith communities represented. Bishop Sharma Lewis was not able to attend because of a week of previously scheduled Cabinet meetings. However, she provided the following statement to be read on her behalf:

"Throughout the Bible, the people of God are called to love immigrants in our midst, treating them 'as if they were one of your citizens and loving them as we do ourselves.' (Leviticus 19: 33-34, New International Version).

"According to our Social Principles, The United Methodist Church recognizes, embraces and affirms all persons regardless of country of origin as members of the family of God. We urge the church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all.

"We oppose immigration policies that separate family members from each other or include detention of families with children, and we call on local churches to be in ministry with immigrant families." (The United Methodist Church--Social Principles 162H)

Conference-wide Week of Prayer will be Apr. 2-8

A prayer movement in response to the Council of Bishops initiative is called Praying Our Way Forward. You are invited whether clergy or laity to pray for God's guidance. The Virginia Conference will hold its designated Week of Prayer from Apr. 2-8. The website umcprays.org will host prayer resources and prayer support for the church. Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett of North Alabama Conference and Bishop Al Gwinn serve as co-chairs of the Praying Our Way Forward movement. "Our prayer focus is two-fold: We are praying that God will help us to fulfill the mission of the church, and we are praying to be one in Christ," said Bishop Wallace-Padgett.

March issue of Advocate shares about UM history, polity

The United Methodist Church is in the midst of adjustment as followers reevaluate their beliefs against those of the church's especially in regards to the issue of human sexuality. In this issue, revisit what the church believes are and the history. The March *Advocate* issue is great for new members and confirmands as well as a refresher course for members. The *Advocate* is the official monthly magazine of the Virginia Conference. To subscribe to the *Advocate*—print, digital or both—call (804) 521-1110 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; email Advocate@vaumc.org; or go to www.vaumc.org/advocate.

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