

PRAYERS FOR VISION 1-9-18
First United Methodist Church Winnsboro

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Today we come together to REJOICE ... PRAY and GIVE THANKS

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

We come this morning to ask for guidance in bringing people to Christ!

ALL: For this reason I am telling you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe (trust and be confident) that it will be granted to you, and you will receive it. Mark 11: 24

We come here to ask, in prayer, for the trust and confidence to know our prayers WILL be answered.

ALL: And whatever you ask for in prayer, having faith and [really] believing, you will receive. Matthew 21: 22

We come together as people of faith, and really BELIEVING ... REALLY BELIEVING, you will answer our prayers.

PASTOR LIGHTS THE FIRST CANDLE

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed. Prov. 29:18

1. OPENING PRAYER

LET US PRAY Father, we are members of this amazing First United Methodist Church of Winnsboro, and we know that we need Your Divine direction and guidance because we CAN'T build this church better than You can! Yes, we may continually try to come up with what we THINK is the best plan ... after all, every one of us in this room has what we THINK is the best direction, the best understanding of our mission field, and the best ministries for our church, but the truth is ... none of us can know this without *Your* direction.

Today, Lord, we boldly come to the throne of grace for mercy just like You said that we should. We know that You have a divine path for us and we come before You to ask you to lead us because WE ARE WILLING and ready. We can accept, oh Lord, that it may not be a clear and straight path ... perhaps there will be mistakes along the way ... perhaps we will be called to begin one path and change directions and try another ... perhaps there will be detours and delays ... perhaps we may even become frustrated, impatient or weary along the way ...

But no matter what, O God, WE PUT OUR TRUST IN YOU! We're looking up to You and we will try, with Your help, to never give up until Your perfect will has been accomplished.

Today we ask You to be with us as we begin our prayer journey to uncover your will for First United Methodist Church ... thank you for making Your will clear for us ... thank you for providing the resources we will need to accomplish Your purpose ... and thank you for supporting us as we love one another along the journey.

In the name of Jesus we ask and pray. AMEN. **LIGHT A CANDLE**

2. A PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT

Let us read Psalm 37:4-5 together:

Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it .

LET US PRAY: Oh Lord, we delight ourselves in You, and commit ourselves to doing Your will because we trust You. Our hearts desire but one thing ... to be Your faithful servants – and we desire to work so that *others* will delight in You too.

Help us to know what to ask You for, for You alone know our *real* needs which is why we put our trust in You. Enable us to discern the true needs of those in our community who do not know you – those needs which are hidden from us. Then, O God, help us be the people You want us to be so others will know the true desires of *their* hearts.

Our hearts are open to You, O Lord, and for Your great mercy's sake, please guide us. Put your mark on us, Your church here in Winnsboro, and help us to do what You want us to do for Your Kingdom.

We offer ourselves in living sacrifice to You and put all our trust in You. We know You have given every person in our church gifts to use for Your kingdom and we thank you and ask you empower EVERYONE to **use** their gifts. Teach us how to pray and speak to us *Yourself*, O God.

Silently now we adore You and allow Your holy will and Your perfect ways to be made clear to us.

AFTER APPROPRIATE SILENCE SAY ... Amen (Light a candle)

3. Reflecting on the Scripture about Our Spiritual Gifts

Now let us reflect on how God uses EACH of us to do the work of His Kingdom as we contemplate the scriptures on His spiritual gifts. *From 1 Corinthians 12:4-31 ...⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.*

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by^[c] one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

¹⁴Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"
²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

(Light a candle)

4. Prayer to Recognize our Spiritual Gifts

LET US PRAY: Oh Lord, You have blessed each of us with wonderful gifts. Through baptism we are members of Christ's Body the Church, and we share in its mission of proclaiming the Gospel and becoming a Holy People.

You have given us each a gift to do a definite service for You: You have committed *different* work to each of us which You have *not* committed to others ... we each have a mission, so please, dear Lord, help us use these gifts! We believe, Father, that somehow, we are each very *necessary* for Your purposes.

We have an important part in Your great work; we are a link in a chain, a bond of connection between people ... You have not created us for nothing!

We shall do good, we shall do *Your good* work; we shall be angels of peace. We shall be ministers of truth in our own church, the church You have named, First United Methodist Church Winnsboro. Fulfill Your high purposes in us, O God, for we are to serve You to be Yours.

Keep our hearts open to following Jesus' way of serving others in love and to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

In our silence now, please affirm our importance in Your Kingdom ... and let us pray that every person in our church will claim THEIR gift and get engaged in doing the work You all them to do.

AFTER APPROPRIATE SILENCE ... Amen. (Light a candle)

5. PRAYER FOR OUR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

LET US PRAY: Oh Lord, our faith community has been blessed and has inherited an abundance of treasures and talents from within our members and we have resources to enable us to carry out this Church's specific mission.

We thank You for the our leaders, those currently serving & those You will call to serve, empowering them to initiate and implement whatever plans You put on our hearts. We ask that You use talents of *everyone* in the church by creating an atmosphere of learning, a spirit of mutual co-operation, and respect for all.

We now lift up the members of our church who serve on the CHURCH COUNCIL (SILENCE)

Those who serve of the PASTOR/PARISH REALTIONS Committee (SILENCE)

Those who serve as TRUSTEES (Silence)

Those who serve on the FINANCE committee. (Silence)

We lift up those on the MISSION Team. (Silence)

We also pray for those who PRAY on Tuesday mornings. (Silence)

We pray for those leading our WORSHIP COMMITTEE. (Silence)

We pray for those who teach our children now, and those who will come forward in the future. (SILENCE)

We lift up our Pastor Debbie, that she may be a strong spiritual leader, guiding others to lead, always following the Holy Spirit. (Silence)

Grant to all those responsible for leadership in our church and in our upcoming visioning process the patience to listen for Your guidance and help them use their skills to formulate a strategy to enable the larger faith community to carry out the tasks, together, that need to be done.

Please guide us, dear God, in all aspects of our life together: prayer, worship, fellowship, and Christian education. Allow our church to be the shining light for others in our community who do not know the love of Your son, Jesus Christ. Amen

(Light a candle)

6. PRAYER FOR GOD'S CHURCH

LET US PRAY: Oh Lord... we thank You for the heritage of worship, work and witness into which we have entered, and of which we are part, at First United Methodist Church Winnsboro. We pray for all who pioneered the church back in 1859 and all who have been its ministers, leaders and members through its story of more than 158 years.

We pray now for the process of reflection and planning for the future in which we are engaged. Guide us by Your Holy Spirit that ALL our services of worship and music and message may be a worthy offering to You, and may we attract, include, and inspire people of all ages, but especially those for whom You want us to reach.

We pray that our inner life of prayer and our attention to scripture may be nurtured, and that the journey of faith may not be seen as the plan of a few but the **call for many**.

We pray that our children and young people may be listened to, encouraged, and challenged to become committed Christians; and that we can bring MORE children and young people and young families into your kingdom.

We pray that our church building itself conveys a message of openness and welcome and our facilities be a means of Christian service to forge effective links with those in our community.

We pray that we can reach out to those on the fringes of faith and *outside* the fringes of faith and be proactive in meeting social and community needs.

Give us the vision and clarity that we need: show us the specific directions we should take, give us the courage to experiment and move forwards, enable adequate resources of money and personnel to be found for our vision to be carried forward into action. And may all we do be done according to the ways of Your Son and the purposes of Your Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our living Lord as we now bring our silent prayers for the church to you.

AFTER A MOMENT OF SILENCE Amen (Light a candle)

7. 1st PRAYER FOR OUR VISIONING PROCESS

Let us read Psalm 127:1-2 together:

*Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.
In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to those he loves. Psalm 127:1-2*

LET US PRAY Oh Lord, Divine Architect, Creator of our Human Family; Risen Jesus, Cornerstone of our Faith, Lover of us all; Spirit of Wisdom, Builder of community, Our Inspiration and Guide ... You *call* us to build up Your Kingdom.

We are simply Your laborers, dear God ... we are trying to be obedient to Your commandment to make new disciples but we know it's not something we can do ... it's something YOU must do!

We truly, with all our hearts, believe that you want to build Your house at First Church Winnsboro ... please direct us so we do not labor in vain. Please watch over our city Lord! We are not afraid to labor, and rise early and stay up late for Your kingdom, and with Your help, we KNOW You will guide us!

We know in our hearts, Father, that You never told us to go and bring people to church – we know You have told us to bring people to **YOU!** Yet we feel some anxiety about our willingness to try new things, explore new ways to reach NEW people in Your name. Please know the depth of sincerity in our hearts, O God ... we want to create an opportunity for people who do not know Your love to feel welcomed, nourished, and empowered by YOUR love so that THEY can then turn around and be Christ for others.

Help us get outside the walls of this building that restrict us and move boldly in faith to be the Church for those who do not know Your love OUTSIDE the walls of this church.

We pray that we, Your builders, will understand the plans that You, the Great Architect, have laid out for us. Please Lord, let our labors not be in vain, but be acceptable to You. AMEN

(Light a candle)

8. 2nd PRAYER FOR OUR VISIONING PROCESS

As we continue to pray for our visioning, let us read together the scripture from John 15:5-8 together:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:5-8

LET US PRAY ... Oh Lord, we are working hard to remain in You, and to allow *You* to remain in *us* so that Your kingdom can grow beyond any expectations! We do not believe You want us to wither, O God, but instead, we truly believe You have plans for the people in Winnsboro to know You and to love You!

You have blessed us financially, Lord, in order to prepare the path for our new vision ... You have generated generous hearts in those who love You and who feel a call to be obedient to Your call to give. Help us to use our resources wisely and for YOUR purposes.

In our efforts to bear healthy fruit, we may stumble and fall, but we will get back up, with Your help, and continue to work hard as Your disciples. Please bless us with generous hearts, open minds, greater unity, and renewed vision as we seek to build opportunities for celebration and worship and learning ... places where people can grow in their relationship with You.

You tell us throughout scripture that *"If we remain in you and your words remain in us, then we can ask for whatever we wish, and it will be done"*. So we will now ask, from our hearts, all the things we desire, all the things we hope for, all the things we dream and ask for ...

- We ask that our Visioning on January 22^m February 5th and February 12th be a blessing to *many* people ... we pray that You are working on the hearts of people right *now* to direct them to a joyful time of worship and conversation with You that will transform their lives and the lives of many others in our community.
- We ask that You guide us to use our money and resources wisely.
- We ask that everyone who will be working so hard, have the tenacity and the perseverance to continue when we are tired
- We ask that we are patient with each other when we're frustrated and that we're reminded that one opinion, even tho' it may be different than ours, or ideas that may not seem possible, may be JUST the spark to lead us to Your divine plan
- We ask that You remind us that we all have different gifts and ALL gifts are important – none of us have all the answers but YOU can guide us to Your answers
- We ask that You give us hope when we feel discouraged or disappointed and to remember that YOUR timing is perfect.
- We ask that our branches are strong and healthy and that You help us to bear LOTS of good fruit

We now ask You to hear all our prayers and know our sincerity and desire to do Your will. Amen.

(Light a candle)

9. PRAYER FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

ALL: Our Father who art in heaven. . . Lord, You are a Father to us, Your people, but we want every person in our neighborhoods and surrounding communities to know You as Father, too. We speak Your comfort and peace to them as we walk our streets to say - we want them to know that You are a God of love and the only genuine source of *everything* they long for now and in eternity yet to come.

ALL: Hallowed be thy name. . . Lord, we are here to represent Your kingdom in the midst of darkness. We want Your presence to come to this neighborhood, and all of Winnsboro, and *all* of our surrounding communities in a special way as we pray. We claim this territory as part of Your Kingdom and declare, "**Every place the soles of our feet tread upon belongs to You.**" We want You, Lord, to claim our community because You love each and every person and we are ALL made in Your image and are ALL precious in Your sight!

ALL: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. . . Lord Jesus, we pray that everyone in our community and surrounding communities would come to know Your will for their lives and obey that will. We pray that the people would repent and seek Your will without fear of compromise and that they would rejoice in their obedience, because it glorifies You.

ALL: Give us this day our daily bread. . . Lord, there are people in our backyards who worry about not having enough food or clothing or shelter. We pray they all learn that You are ready and willing to supply all of their physical, emotional and spiritual needs daily, if they would look to You. We also know there are people who struggle with bad choices, inspired by fear and insecurity, and we pray that they would turn to You for their confidence and security and hope.

ALL: And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. . . . Lord, teach the precious people in

our community about Your forgiveness for them and Your requirements of their forgiveness towards others. Father, our neighbors need to know about Your wonderful grace and forgiveness in Christ, so that the burdens of guilt they bear can be lifted and that their forgiveness will then relieve the burdens of others. Lord, teach them about forgiveness as a stepping stone into unimaginable freedom and blessings.

ALL: And lead us not into temptation. . . . Lord, many in our communities are in agonizing difficulties due to their sins, addictions, illnesses, loneliness, and worry . . . we are asking You to show them the way out of these problems and into Your freedom. Relieve them of all bondage, and feed them in the comfort of Your pasture. Deliver them from despair and fill them with Your hope.

ALL: But deliver us from the evil one. . . . Father, help our neighbors stop blaming and fighting with each other and give them an awareness of the spiritual realm and its impact on their daily lives. Grant them a sense of the spiritual battle we are all engaged in and teach them that Jesus has already won the victory!

ALL: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.. Again, Lord, we pray that You would be glorified in our work. We ask that all the people would learn to praise You spontaneously because they really know who You are - as the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and that the Scriptures are Your priceless revelation of Yourself to the world and to each individual person. We want our neighbors to be lifted out of darkness and put into Your wonderful kingdom of light so that *together* we may worship You in unity and love forever. We are here to glorify You and to enjoy You forever, and we ask that this entire city and our neighboring cities and, in fact, the whole world would come to realize this ultimate purpose for their existence. Thy kingdom come - here, beginning today!

Let us now read together the scripture on the screens: *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."* (Ephesians 3:20-21)

(LIGHT A CANDLE)

10. PRAYER FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR SCHOOLS

LET US PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR SCHOOLS: Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of children. Thank You that before time began You knew these families and friends would be interconnected through Your Holy Spirit and we humbly come before You today recognizing these children are only on loan to us. As each year passes, they become more and more Yours, not ours.

Father, we pray that each one will know the depth of Your great love for them and know that You gave Your Son so that they could have life forever with You! May they develop a great love for You and a deep desire to have a personal relationship with You. We thank You, God, for creating them with a specific plan and purpose for their lives. Thank You that they are valuable and precious in Your sight.

Lord, may each of them know how extravagantly and unconditionally You love them...that You will never leave them or forsake them no matter what they do. May they be secure in that knowledge. Show them in very personal and powerful ways how wide and high and deep and long Your love is.

Draw godly friends and mentors into their lives, oh God. Give them friends who are true, wise, kind, and encouraging. Give them great discernment as they choose those whom they will date. May all relationships they have make You the center and honor You.

Father, let them stand apart and be light in darkness, joy in sadness, peace in discontent, and order in chaos. Let their character and integrity shine forth like the sun!

For those teachers that believe in You, strengthen them and uphold them with Your mighty right hand. Father, give them an extra measure of wisdom, knowledge, and revelation to excel as teachers and shine in darkness. Provide them with opportunities to share their faith with faculty, staff, and administration and give them the courage to do it. For those teachers who do not believe in You, we pray they are drawn to You and You change their lives in amazing ways!

We pray for every level of administration. We pray for wisdom beyond comprehension as they make decisions for the schools and school systems. We pray for divine direction. We pray that You would direct the steps of ALL those making decisions for our children, including members of our school Board. Make Your way clear and place those who walk with You in places of authority and decision-making. Bless their efforts. Give them favor.

Father, we boldly ask for many to come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and yield their lives to Christ and we pray, oh God, that First Church Winnsboro can be the place where Your light shines on many.

Thank You in advance for all You will do in and through our prayers. We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ our Lord!

(LIGHT A CANDLE)

11. PRAYERS FOR OUR COMMUNITY BUSINESSES

LET US PRAY FOR OUR COMMUNITY BUSINESSES: We pray that Godly wisdom be given each manager and employee of our city and that they glorify God for their successes.

We pray for cooperation between departments, shifts, and employees, a team motivation that seeks the welfare of the whole, not just the individual; for an elimination of negative attitudes that tend to poison the work environment.

We pray for the ability to face the challenges and struggles that confront them each day with a firm knowledge and confidence that *"He who is with-in you is greater than he who is in the world."* (1 John 4:4)

We pray for the customers and vendors who come into our local businesses: we pray that God's grace and mercy would go before them to create healthy working relationships for everyone.

For your marketplace that it would continue to grow and expand, providing work for those who need a job, and income to those providing for their families.

For the company owners and officers that they would *"trust in the Lord with all their hearts, not leaning only on their own understanding."* (Proverbs 3:5).

12. PRAYER FOR OUR CITY LEADERS AND SERVANTS

Let us pray TOGETHER the following prayers for our city leaders and servants:

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

We pray for the churches in our communities to be passionate about saving your cities from disaster. (Genesis 18:20-33)

We pray for Christians in the marketplace to weep as they intercede for the city's broken walls and gates, cry out to the Lord, and receive the favor of secular leaders.(Nehemiah 1:1 – 2:10)

We ask the Lord to grant peace and prosperity to your local cities and for Christ's influence to increase. (Jeremiah 29:7)

We pray for church leaders to have a God-sized concern for your cities. (Jonah 4:10-11)

Pray for our local cities to show and tell the good news to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed. (Luke 4:18-19)

We pray for our cities to become places of refuge for people seeking protection, justice or redemption. (Numbers 35:6)

We pray for our police to be safe, just, fair and diligent. We pray for Your divine protection to keep our neighborhoods protected and places of peace.

We pray with firefighters for safety and security in the city.

We pray for those on our local City Councils that they make wise decisions, led by the Holy Spirit, and that their decisions have positive effects on the community.

AMEN

LIGHT A CANDLE

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed. Prov. 29:18