

LENTEN SERIES on Prayer -- WEDNESDAY REFLECTION
Lent 2, February 24, 2021
CONFESSION

I. CONFESSION

Not as much a part of our tradition in the UCC as the Episcopal church.

At CUCC, and in my ministry for many years, we have drawn on quite a wide ecumenical stream of resources for prayers and liturgy each week. Presbyterian, Methodist, UCC, Black Liturgies and other sites that are arising in these days.

Sometimes a prayer of Invocation or Opening Prayer is used in the service; other times a prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon. According to what it seems the congregation most needs and what words speak to us in our time.

I'll never forget hearing in my former church that someone ran up to the Pastor one day, after we had included a Prayer of Confession and shaking the bulletin at him and saying, "I don't need to come to church to feel bad about myself!"

I went to a seminary in Canada, and encountered this prayer for the first time. We used it almost every week in chapel and I came to love it. I also came to appreciate the beauty of regular confession, and found it grounding, spiritually – not guilt-inducing!

VST -- Confession of Sin

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and **by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

*Presbyterian, **Rev. Thom Shuman** is one we're using a good deal these days, as he's writing very meaningful liturgies for the pandemic time. He will start his liturgy after the Call to Worship and Opening Hymn with a Call to Reconciliation. And then, what follows is often called Prayer of Forgiveness. Followed by a time of silence and an Affirmation of Pardon.

This week, however, it was called a Prayer of Confession. It seems to be a fluid, flowing movement in the Church in general—how the Spirit moves the writers of the prayers and the pray-ers themselves. I like that. I resonate with a Spirit of ever-breathing life and movement.

Here is this week's prayer movement from Thom Shuman:

Call to Reconciliation

Given a test on our faith, would we have a passing grade? Looking at our lives of discipleship, would we be considered good models for others? When we fail to trust God, we discover that we do indeed lead barren lives. Let us be honest as we stand before our God, and bring our confessions for forgiveness and hope.

Unison Prayer of Confession

God of Sarah and Abraham, in this holy place, we know how weak is our discipleship. We can spend hours at the computer, but only give you fleeting moments of our time. We can talk endlessly on our cell phones, but fall silent when it comes to sharing our fears, our worries, our hopes with you. We seek quick fixes for our problems, rather than seeking your vision and future for our lives.

**God of Peter, Paul, and the psalmist, forgive us:
for our lack of trust;
for our faithless living;
for our closing our ears to the call of Jesus.**

Forgive us, so we may lay aside all the keeps us from you, so we may take up the life you offer to us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

This is the good news: God does not go back on the promises made so long ago. God does not reject us, God redeems us. God does not withhold love, God pours it into our barren lives.

Forgiven of our sins, filled with hope, living in relationship with God and one another—we are a new people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

II. WHERE DO WE LIVE? CENTER OR CIRCUMFERENCE?

Richard Rohr opines, in “Everything Belongs,” that we “are a *circumference people*, with little access to the center. We live on the boundaries of our own lives...too quickly claiming the superficial as substance. These boundaries and edges are not “bad” as much as they are “passing, accidental, sometimes illusory.”

I wonder, where would we place ourselves? Are we living In the Center—from the heart, where Christ resides? Or, more on the circumference? In something like a spinning circle.

CAT TOY:

My cats have a favorite toy—you’ve probably seen it, that’s a big round circle, with a scratching platform in the center, with a tunnel around it where a ball spins. Endlessly.

It’s called by numerous names: “Scratch & Roll Spinning Cat Toy;” “Crazy Circle” “Cat mental and physical exerciser—providing endless chasing and spinning in circles!” You get the idea!

When I imagine about “living on the circumference of our lives,” this comes immediately to mind!

How much time (and energy!) do *we* spend—running around in circles, chasing something we can’t catch, skimming the surface or perimeter of life, rather than digging in, grounding ourselves, and collecting our energies and goals in a centered place and space?

Where do we find ourselves *today*?

We might start, in asking that question, by asking if it's really an *either/or* question at all! Dualistic thinking is *so* easy to fall into!

When life gets hard, is God *only* in the Center, *if* we can find our way to it? Or, is God *also* out there on the edge, hanging with us in the midst of our endless striving, chasing the elusive ball in circles, and thinking THIS time we will surely catch it and win the game?!

How do we live from the CENTER most of the time? Or at least some of the time? Lent calls us to ask that question daily, if not hourly.

Yes, God is in both the center and circumference, but are we centered, living in the calm, God-infused heart-space that we want to be? What practices can we use—like Confession—to bring us back to the Center and keep us there, when we get to spinning around the edges?

***EXERCISE: WRITE YOUR OWN
PRAYER OF CONFESSION***

For “homework” with Spiritual Practices this week, we invite you to write your own Prayer of Confession. It doesn't have to be poetic or profound. It just needs to be from your heart. From you to God—and reflect what's happening in your life.

An Example: Rebecca K. Poos:

What do I need to confess?

When I don't live in the now.

When I can't learn to say No.

When I let my energies get dissipated like a mighty river breaking into a bunch of little rivulets and weakened streams.

When I feel out of the flow and don't return to the center to get back in the flow.
(for a long time, anyway!)

When voices I listen to the most are critical ones—my own inner critic and others who don't know my true identity, instead of the voice God, who calls me Beloved.

When my spiritual disciplines go the way of New Year's Resolutions.

When my Lenten devotionals sit untouched after the first week in Lent!

When I forget that God is God and I am not.

When I spin around on the periphery of my life or community, rather than living in the Center.

When I take for granted anything that others do not have: a warm home, running water, a roof over our heads, food on the table, a loving family and equal rights as humans.

When I forget to be grateful.

When I look to the mountains too casually and momentarily, and lose mindfulness of the extreme gift it is that we get to live here.

When I forget what a Gift it is to belong to a loving, welcoming of all, embracing church community.

Forgive me Lord, please hear my confession. Amen.

THE GREAT LITANY

To be said or sung, kneeling, standing, or in procession; before the Eucharist or after the Collects of Morning or Evening Prayer; or separately; especially in Lent and on Rogation days.

O God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth,
Have mercy upon us.

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

O God the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier of the faithful,
Have mercy upon us.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, one God,
Have mercy upon us.

Remember not, Lord Christ, our offenses, nor the offenses of our forefathers; neither reward us according to our sins. Spare us, good Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and by thy mercy preserve us, for ever.
Spare us, good Lord.

From all evil and wickedness; from sin; from the crafts and assaults of the devil; and from everlasting damnation,
Good Lord, deliver us.
From all blindness of heart;
from pride, vainglory,
and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all want of charity,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From all inordinate and sinful affections; and from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and commandment,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From lightning and tempest; from earthquake, fire, and
flood; from plague, pestilence, and famine,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From all oppression, conspiracy, and rebellion; from
violence, battle, and murder; and from dying suddenly and
unprepared,
Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity
and submission to the Law; by thy Baptism, Fasting, and
Temptation,
Good Lord, deliver us.

By thine Agony and Bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion;
by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection
and Ascension; and by the Coming of the Holy Ghost,
Good Lord, deliver us.

In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in
the hour of death, and in the day of judgment,
Good Lord, deliver us.

We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God; and that
it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church
Universal in the right way,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to illumine all bishops, priests, and
deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of thy
Word; and that both by their preaching and living, they may
set it forth, and show it accordingly,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to bless and keep all thy people,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to send forth laborers into thy
harvest, and to draw all mankind into thy kingdom,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to give to all people increase of grace
to hear and receive thy Word, and to bring forth the fruits of
the Spirit,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to bring into the way of truth all such
as have erred, and are deceived,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to give us a heart to love and fear
thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee so to rule the hearts of thy servants,
the President of the United States (*or of this nation*), and all
others in authority, that they may do justice, and love mercy,
and walk in the ways of truth,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to make wars to cease in all the world;
to give to all nations unity, peace, and concord; and to
bestow freedom upon all peoples,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to show thy pity upon all prisoners
and captives, the homeless and the hungry, and all who are
desolate and oppressed,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to give and preserve to our use the
bountiful fruits of the earth, so that in due time all may enjoy
them,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to inspire us, in our several callings,
to do the work which thou givest us to do with singleness of
heart as thy servants, and for the common good,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to preserve all who are in danger by
reason of their labor or their travel,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to preserve, and provide for, all
women in childbirth, young children and orphans, the
widowed, and all whose homes are broken or torn by strife,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to visit the lonely; to strengthen all
who suffer in mind, body, and spirit; and to comfort with thy
presence those who are failing and infirm,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to support, help, and comfort all who
are in danger, necessity, and tribulation,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to have mercy upon all mankind,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to give us true repentance; to forgive
us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue
us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit to amend our lives
according to thy holy Word,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors,
and slanderers, and to turn their hearts,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand; to
comfort and help the weak-hearted; to raise up those who
fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to grant to all the faithful departed
eternal life and peace,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to grant that, in the fellowship of
[_____ and] all the saints, we may attain to thy
heavenly kingdom,
We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us.
Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Grant us thy peace.

O Christ, hear us.
O Christ, hear us.

Lord, have mercy upon us. or Kyrie eleison.

Christ, have mercy upon us. or Christe eleison.

Lord, have mercy upon us. or Kyrie eleison.

When the Litany is sung or said immediately before the Eucharist, the Litany concludes here, and the Eucharist begins with the Salutation and the Collect of the Day.

On all other occasions, the Officiant and People say together

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil. Amen.

V. O Lord, let thy mercy be showed upon us;

R. As we do put our trust in thee.

*The Officiant concludes with the following or some other Collect
Let us pray.*

Almighty God, who hast promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in thy Son's Name: We beseech thee mercifully to incline thine ear to us who have now made our prayers and supplications unto thee; and grant that those things which we have asked faithfully according to thy will, may be obtained effectually, to the relief of our necessity, and to the setting forth of thy glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

*The Officiant may add other Prayers, and end the Litany, saying
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore.
Amen.*

The Supplication

For use in the Litany in place of the Versicle and Collect which follows the Lord's Prayer; or at the end of Morning or Evening Prayer; or as a separate devotion; especially in times of war, or of national anxiety, or of disaster.

O Lord, arise, help us;
And deliver us for thy Name's sake.

O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.

*O Lord, arise, help us;
and deliver us for thy Name's sake.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*O Lord, arise, help us;
and deliver us for thy Name's sake.*

- V. From our enemies defend us, O Christ;
R. Graciously behold our afflictions.
V. With pity behold the sorrows of our hearts;
R. Mercifully forgive the sins of thy people.
V. Favorably with mercy hear our prayers;
R. O Son of David, have mercy upon us.
V. Both now and ever vouchsafe to hear us, O Christ;
R. Graciously hear us, O Christ; graciously hear us, O Lord Christ.

The Officiant concludes
Let us pray.

We humbly beseech thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities; and, for the glory of thy Name, turn from us all those evils that we most justly have deserved; and grant that in all our troubles we may put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy, and evermore serve thee in holiness and pureness of living, to thy honor and glory; through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Penitential Litany – Lent 2021

By Timothy Wood, Written in response to the events of January 6, 2021

Reader For the times we have failed utterly to reject the hatred that Jesus rejected on the cross, and when we have not let our intense feelings be formed and fueled by love,

ALL Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Reader For the times we have not strongly opposed the association of Jesus with the idolatry of white supremacy and other forms of racism, and when we have not let our mixed feelings be formed and fueled by love,

ALL Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Reader For the times we have been indifferent towards the suffering of others—especially people of color—and when we have not let our ambivalent feelings be formed and fueled by love,

ALL Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Reader For the times we have failed to stand against the hatred, idolatry, and indifference in our own lives and in the life of our country, and when we have avoided conflict for the sake of our own comfort,

ALL Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner.

Pause...

Reader O Lord, you have come to dwell with us in grace and truth.

ALL We have greatly desired your grace, but we have not always desired your truth.

Reader Your prophets have taught us to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

ALL We have eagerly sought your mercy, but we have not always sought the justice of your kingdom. We have walked humbly with you when it has been convenient for us.

ALL O Lord, if you had kept track of our sins, which one of us could stand? But with you, there is steadfast love and forgiveness.

Silence

Reader When we stood accused by others and by ourselves

ALL Jesus noticed us,
listened to the accusations,
and then asked, "who condemns you?"
So, we go—
no longer accusing ourselves of sins that have been forgiven, nor condemning others for the sins that God has forgiven them.

Reader We were cast down and weighed down by our sin,

ALL and Jesus reached out,
and raised us to our feet.
So, we go—
sure of his loving confidence in us
to live by the power of his Spirit—
people who are free to choose,
who seek to choose that which is good.

Reader We have seen the love and power of God
 who triumphs over the powers of sin and death!

ALL And so we leave behind the things of the past
 and look to the future with confidence!
 We have not yet won.
 We are still running the race.
 But we know the prize that awaits us
 and live in the joyful hope
 of gaining the prize to which God calls us upwards
 to receive in Christ Jesus!
 Amen.