

Psalm 42:7-8 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ Deep calls to deep
 in the roar of your waterfalls;
 all your waves and breakers
 have swept over me.

⁸ By day the LORD directs his love,
 at night his song is with me—
 a prayer to the God of my life.

Matthew 21:21-22 New International Version (NIV)

²¹ Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. ²² If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

For me Psalm 19:14

¹⁴ May the words of my mouth
 and the meditation of my heart
 be acceptable in thy sight,
 O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

Prayer is a communication between you and God/Jesus/Holy Spirit. It can be a prayer of gratitude, a prayer of thanksgiving, or a prayer request for help.

In the Old Testament, most of the prayers recorded are beautiful poetic prayers written in the psalms. In the New Testament, Jesus is most often portrayed in private prayer with God. The main exception is when the disciples asked him how to pray and he gave us the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus also prayed at the Garden of Gethsemane to ask God to alter the course of the next day if it be God’s will. Finally, he prayed on the cross to release his spirit from his tortured body.

CS Lewis said ““I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.”

Some people practice a specific formula for prayer beginning with an expression of gratitude, then praise, and confession, followed by a request. I tend to be in *more of a dialog with God*; a running conversation, if you will. The important aspect is that God is *listening and answers*.

I came from a family of very diverse religious backgrounds. My mother was raised in the Southern Baptist Church of Dothan, Alabama. My father was raised in the Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, PA. Dad (who loved to tell a good story) used to say that the only time the name of Jesus Christ was heard in the Unitarian Church was *when the janitor fell down the back steps*.

While my parents were raising my brother and me, we attended various protestant churches, wherever the minister gave great sermons. And as Wendy Haupt previously said, she and I attended the Foothills Congregational Church of Los Altos, CA, although we were some years apart in our attendance. We did hear the same minister, Rev. Chuck Bezdek, as he was there for many years.

My Mom had a very close relationship with God, which she shared with my brother and me. Coming home from school every day, my brother and I would sit on the stool in the kitchen to talk to her about our day and often hear her mini sermons about life and God. I called these “the sermons on the stool”. Her discussions with us were filled with her faith. She used to quote Tennyson saying, “*More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of: Wherefore, let thy voice, Rise like a fountain for me night and day.*”

I went off to college as a young woman to live in the dorms. While living in the dorms, I had the usual angst of being on my own for the first time, stressed about classes, etc. Eventually I met some people from Campus Crusade for Christ. They witnessed to me about Jesus and I accepted Him in my life as my personal Savior.

Thus, because of my mother and the people from CCC, I generally walk around with a sense of God’s readiness to abide with me, if I will but stop long enough to listen to him.

I arrived in Salt Lake City as an incoming junior student at the UU. This was the first church that I attended upon my arrival. I quickly learned that it was Rev. Doug Lobb’s final sermon here. I realized that it would take some time before a new pastor started here so I sampled various Protestant churches in the valley. I returned to FCC on Rev. Karl Schimpf’s 2nd Sunday as pastor. I knew from that time on that I was “home”. I have made great friends here. Many of you became my adopted family in SLC. Later, in 1990, Rev. Art Ritter asked me to become a parish nurse here.

I **absolutely** believe that God answers prayers. It may be as requested or the response may not be as predicted, or it may not be in **my** time frame at all. But he does answer. I often request that *God be here now* with me. That one is always answered in the moment.

I remember a time, in 1976, that I was driving **alone** in my car, and was **particularly nervous** about taking my upcoming licensing exam to become a registered nurse. I was praying out loud to God. I said something to the effect of “You said I should become a nurse. You got me into the nursing program, and through all of the classroom and clinical work. Now I need you to help me pass this exam, **because if I fail, I, psychologically,** won’t be able **to re-take** this exam.” I distinctly heard a male voice from the backseat of my car say “I Will”.

I sat for the 2 days of licensing exams at Weber State, and during the second day, on a warm afternoon following lunch, I was falling asleep during the psychiatric nursing exam. Thank God, the fire alarm went off (they were working on the system). It woke me up as I threw my #2 pencil into the air. I stayed awake after that and did pass my licensing exam. And I learned the power of the medical phrase “post-prandial somnolence”.

In January 2016, I suffered a ruptured cerebral aneurysm. Many people die from this diagnosis. **I didn’t** and I attribute this to wonderful prayer support from this church and friends, a prompt response from my husband, and great health care. The fact that I can walk, talk, drive, and make **some sense** is by God’s grace.

In my life, I have a strong sense of God’s presence around me. I am continually reminded of the beauty of his creation when I walk my dog in the early morning and watch the morning light illuminate the canyon walls of Little Cottonwood Canyon. I feel God’s presence throughout my day if I remember to **Be Open** to Him. He certainly is present all around at Camp Fellowship. Throughout the days and nights, we invite God into all that we do at Camp.

Many years ago here at FCC, Nancy Dahill and I conceived of the idea of our Prayer Chain. We called it “Christians Appealing to the Living Lord or C.A.L.L.”, and now we just call it Prayer Chain. We have around 30 people on the Chain who commit to praying for individuals who need prayer intervention due to illness, surgery, hospitalization,

grief, a celebration of a joy, or whatever the reason. Each of us as pray-ers commits to keeping the issues confidential and we pray in whatever manner and regularity that fits with the pray-er.

When I am praying for someone who is ill, I ask God to be with him/her. It may be to guide the nurses and doctors caring for someone in hospital. It is often to guide a surgeon and the surgical team during an operation. I ask that they be rested and “at the top of their game” for the surgery. It may be to ask God to fill the patient with a sense of His presence and comfort. I don’t ask for **specific results** often because I believe that God has that in Hand. My will is not important. It is God’s Will that is desired.

As a parish nurse, I will sometimes pray with people who I visit. More often, I commit to praying before I visit and after I visit them. I pray to be open to the person and what God wants for him/her; to be God’s voice in that visit. I am *personally handicapped by tears*, which often come on during public prayer for someone, so I tend, more often, to pray in private. I would rather the prayer be about the other person, more than my emotions.

We are at a serious point in our church’s history where we need to pray for God’s direction for this beloved faith community. We need His presence filling us as we seek his Will for our Faith Community. We certainly need His guidance in our decisions about our church building, our pastoral search, and our faith community.

Our diversity of religious experience is part of our strength as a faith community. We come together to understand God and to do his Will in our World. We need **God’s presence** to fill us here. We want His guidance and to know **His Will** for our church.

This isn’t a **passive** way of being. This is a position of waiting and being *ready to act* with His blessing.

I invite you *to engage in regular prayer for our church and its future*. We have a wonderful, historical faith tradition as a Congregational Church and as a church in this valley. We want *to continue* to be here as a beacon of faith, freedom and fellowship.

So please join with me in prayer for our church. Amen