



Prayer Vigil: 3-hour Prayer Experience

Praying for the General Conference, the Elected Delegates, our Church, and our World

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

It will be helpful to have a Bible, a cross, the United Methodist logo with the cross and flame, a globe or world map, paper and pens or pencils for writing, a candle, and a means to light the candle. You will need the list of the elected delegates and alternates from your Annual Conference.

Please download the following free PDF files from the website:

www.60daysofprayer.org

1. *60 Days of Prayer for General Conference 2016*
2. *United Methodists: A Connected Church*
3. *Instructions for making Protestant Prayer Bead Strands*

You will also need to order a supply kit to make Protestant Prayer Bead Strands for General Conference. This is available from www.PrayerWorksStudio.com at a cost for the supplies, shipping, and handling.

When you are ready to begin, we encourage you to use these words or others of your own choosing:

- We light this candle as a reminder that Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
- We place this cross to remind us that we serve a risen Lord who is the head of the church.
- We place the United Methodist cross and flame to remind us that we were formed in 1969 from the union of two expressions of the Church universal, the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church (the two flames by the one cross).
- We place this copy of *60 Days of Prayer for General Conference* on the table to remind us that 13 million United Methodists around the world will be joining us in prayer the 40 days before General Conference, the eleven days during the event, and the nine days after it is completed.
- We place these supplies to make Protestant prayer bead strands on the table, asking God to help us create a beautiful gift for each of the General Conference delegates, alternates, and leaders—this gift will be a physical reminder that we are praying for them and with them.

OPENING SCRIPTURE

[When you are ready, please read the following passage from the Gospel of John, Chapter 1:1-5 (the Common English Bible translation is printed below).]

In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

² The Word was with God in the beginning.

³ Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being.

What came into being
⁴ through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

Prayerfully reflect on this truth, that the Word—Jesus Christ—was with God and was God from the very beginning. Everything that “came into being” did so because the Word— Jesus—was involved in the creation of all things—all people—all planets—all solar systems—everything! We are one in Christ by creation and by redemption. Through our profession of faith in Christ and baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we are spiritually connected to one another.

What prayers, songs, feelings, or images come to you now as you reflect on Jesus Christ as the creator, the life, and the light for all people?

[Pause here for two to five minutes. This will allow time to center ourselves in Christ through praying, singing, and drawing, etc.]

Now, offer a prayer for yourself and for all your brothers and sisters in the United Methodist Church who have responded to the call to Christian discipleship. Open yourself to this holy mystery of our oneness in Jesus Christ. Meditate on the spiritual reality that we are sisters and brothers. Pray that this deep and essential truth will undergird and guide all preparation for the General Conference, all the interactions during the General Conference, and the commitments made at the General Conference.

[Pause three to five minutes for prayer, reflection, and writing, etc.]

When you are ready, read this verse from John 1:14 CEB.

The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.
We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,

Let the Holy Spirit help us consider anew the mystery of the incarnation, the cosmic Christ who was involved in all creation, now comes to us as a baby—so vulnerable—so powerful— so unique. Consider Charles Wesley's poetic reflection on the mystery

of how the unique Word of God became flesh, “God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man.”

What prayer or thought comes to you now as you consider the mystery of the incarnation— God with us—the Word become flesh?

[Pause to reflect and pray. Feel free to write or draw. If there is a group, invite people to briefly tell about the thoughts and prayers that come to them today.]

When you are ready, consider the character and content of the living Word of God who “became flesh and made his home among us...full of grace and truth.” As you consider the essential nature of Jesus Christ—full of love, grace, and truth—what prayer, song, feelings, and pictures come to you?

[Pause for two to five minutes to write or draw or pray the thoughts and feelings that come to you.]

PRAY FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Now go to “United Methodists: A Connected Church” graphic, study the picture and read the text. Consider the awesome responsibility of these 864 men and women from around the world, meeting for 11 days full of worship, prayer, and discussion in order to discern God’s will and direction for 13 million United Methodists.

Pray for this assembly, its member and its leaders, as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray. [Pause for a few minutes to pray, reflect, write, or draw.]

PRAY FOR THE DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Now, take up the list containing the names of the lay and clergy delegates of your annual conference. If you wish, you can also pray for the delegates and alternates from your Jurisdiction or any of the other areas of the world.

Pray for the delegates and alternates by name as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray.

THE UPPER ROOM 60 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE 2016

Offer this introduction to the prayer book, *60 Days of Prayer*:

Friends, we are here in response to the invitation from the Council of Bishops. The bishops request that each of the 131 Annual Conferences commit to 24 hours of prayer for our church, the upcoming General Conference, and God’s mission to reach the whole world with the whole gospel. We introduce this book, *60 Days of Prayer*, to you today so it can help us pray together. The editors from The Upper Room compiled it for this purpose. We will use it with the hope that you will take it back

and share with your family, your small group, your local church, your district, and at other Annual Conference events.

Today we will read passages from the book to help us pray for our church and the General Conference.

Will someone please read the first three paragraphs of page 7?

[Pause for the reading. Then the leader asks,]

What thoughts or feelings come to you as you consider 13 million men, women, youth, and children praying together for 60 days?

[Pause to let people answer.]

Let us pray now for grace and guidance for the United Methodist Church, and our fellow members around the world. Feel free to pray aloud or in silence as we spend the next few minutes in prayer for the creativity and strength to engage our entire denomination in earnest, fervent prayer as the Holy Spirit might lead us to pray together this year from March 31 through May 29.

[Pause to let the people pray.]

Now, would someone else read the third paragraph on page 8. [Leader Note: Try to have a diversity of ages and genders read throughout this exercise. After the reading, ask this question.]

Do you agree or disagree with the importance of prayer in the life of Jesus and the teaching of the Wesley brothers. To say, “God does nothing apart from prayer” is a very strong statement.

[Pause to let people share their thoughts. Now have a different person read the final paragraph on page 8 and the remainder of the text on page 9.]

Is God calling you to gather and lead your family, your small group, your local church, or your district in an intentional 60 days of prayer? Let us pray together for the grace and guidance we need. Feel free to pray silently or aloud—as you feel led.

[Pause for prayers by the people.]

PRAYERFULLY CREATE THE FIRST PROTESTANT PRAYER BEAD STRAND

[The leader will have to ordered the supply kit for this project. The supplies should now be provided to all of the participants. The leader will begin by asking,]

How many of you believe that it is possible to pray with your eyes open? Would any one be willing to share an experience of praying with your eyes open?

[Pause to let a few people comment. Then the leader will ask,]

Do you believe it is possible to pray with your hands? Would any one be willing to share an experience of praying with your hands or your body?

[Pause to let a few people comment or share an experience. If there is no response, the leader could ask, have any of you heard of a prayer shawl ministry? Or, have you heard of people making prayer quilts or prayer blankets for children?]

In the supply kit for the General Conference Prayer Bead project, you will find a DVD with various segments for this three-hour prayer experience. If time allows, play Part I by Kristen Vincent describing the history of Protestant prayer beads. If time is short, the leader can summarize it briefly. Then use these words or some others of your own choosing:]

It is our intention to provide the opportunity for United Methodists around the world to pray with their hands by making a simple Protestant prayer bead strand featuring the unique General Conference 2016 medallion that includes a mountain sheep to remind us that we are engaged in the mission of the good shepherd, to go and actively seek the one sheep missing from the flock.

[Note for Leaders in Central Conferences: If you are outside the USA, choose materials that are available in your country. The unique UMC medallion will be available through the secretary of the General Conference at the Pre-Conference Briefings for the Central Conferences.]

Now play the video clip with Kristen Vincent demonstrating how to make the General Conference prayer bead strand. In the kit, you will find a completed sample of the final product and a document that gives step-by-step instructions. The video and instructions are also available at the website: www.60daysofprayer.org

[Play DVD]

Now that we have instructions on how to make a prayer strand, here's some additional spiritual guidance. As you create the General Conference prayer bead strand, pray for the person who will receive the prayer strand you are making. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you about this specific person and what spiritual strength and guidance he or she might need as they prepare for the journey, as they read the many pages of documents that will be considered, and as they seek God's guidance for the United Methodist Church.

Sometimes, as we prayerfully construct the bead strands, there will be no specific insights that come. At other times, people just like you and I have received very

specific guidance. One man in the past felt specifically guided to pray for a young man who was a first time delegate. The prompting was to pray that the young man would have wisdom beyond his years and the leadership insights needed for our church. Likewise, one woman felt guided to pray for a woman delegate from Asia, who was feeling uncertain about her place in the UMC and doubted her ability to speak during the General Conference. The woman creating the prayer bead strand felt the Holy Spirit leading her to pray for the Asian woman who would receive the beads, that she would have holy boldness, deep confidence that God had called her to be a delegate for such a time as this, and that she would have the words to speak when she felt the prompting to use her voice and share her perspective in the legislative committee and on the floor of the General Conference. My request to you is that you simply be open and attentive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as you pray and create this strand of prayer beads for the General Conference. I will also alert you that we will make one or two more prayer strands during our time together.

[Allow each participant time to make one strand of prayer beads, and then ask them to return to the circle or seating area for the entire group.]

[When the group has returned, ask participants to tell about their experience of making the prayer strand for a delegate or leader. Be attentive to allow time for men and woman, young and old, to share. Then the leader will lead the group in a brief prayer and transition into the next prayer experience using *60 Days of Prayer*.]

Gracious and loving God, we offer our prayers and this gift of prayer beads to You. May the person who receives them receive a double portion of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised, so that we might “go and make disciples.” AMEN.

THE UPPER ROOM *60 DAYS OF PRAYER* BOOK

We will now enter another prayer experience before making a second strand of the prayer beads. I need two people to read from page 10, one to read the scripture and the other to read the meditation written by Rev. Laura Jaquith Bartlett, the Worship Leader for the 2016 General Conference.

[Pause for the reading of Matthew 28:19-20, followed by a second person to read the meditation.]

This passage in Matthew 28:19-20 is sometimes referred to as “The Great Commission.” The resurrected Jesus is commissioning his disciples to continue the work God had given him to do—to go discipling, to go baptizing, and to go teaching. Please join me in prayer that God will empower us to do the work Jesus called and commissioned us to do.

[Pause for two or more minutes for people to pray, reflect, and write. At the end of this time the leader will say, Jesus, we are your disciples—teach us to pray and guide us in our going. AMEN.]

PRAYERFULLY CREATE THE SECOND PROTESTANT PRAYER BEAD STRAND

[The leader will instruct the participants to gather the needed supplies and return to the place where they made the first strand of prayer beads. The leader will then ask the host or one of the participants to offer a prayer. The leader can use these words or some others,]

As we begin to “pray with our hands” by making a second prayer bead strand for another delegate, or our pastor, or for ourselves, who would be willing to voice a prayer for us as we begin this work?

[Allow the person to pray and then the group can begin their work. If time and materials allow, the group can make a third strand for themselves, another delegate, or for their pastor.]

[When the group has completed the second (and or third) strand and returned to the gathering place, invite them again to tell about their experience of making the prayer strand. Then the leader will invite another member of the group to offer a brief prayer for the person who will receive the gift of the prayer bead strand.]

[Pause for prayer. Then the leader will say,]

As we conclude this three-hour prayer experience, we want to pray for one another and for the world. Please find someone new to be your prayer partner, groups of two or three.

[Pause to let the new groups form. Then guide the small groups using these words or others of your own choosing,]

PRAY FOR THE WORLD

The Church of Jesus Christ is a missionary church—engaged in God’s mission to seek and save the lost, the least, and the lonely. And we are missionary people, Jesus Christ has called and commissioned us to participate in the mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world. To do that we must be ready and willing to go.

First, I would like you to name the most important prayer need in your life today. If you could ask God for only one thing, what would it be? [Pause to let the participants reflect for 30 to 60 seconds.] Now, I would like you to share this prayer request with your partner and pray for one another. Your prayer for the other person may be silent or aloud. God will have already heard the need as your partner

shared it with you. I will give you three or four minutes to do this, then we will have another guided prayer experience.

[Pause and watch to see that each small group has time to pray for one another. Then the leader may say,]

Look at this globe or world map. If you do not have one, imagine yourself in space and looking down on the earth. There are seven billion people on this planet. Who are the people you feel guided to intercede for? Is there a region of the world that God is prompting you to prayer for? A certain group of people, perhaps those with HIV/AIDS, orphans, the homeless or hungry, the elderly, boy soldiers, girls forced into sexual slavery, teachers, refugees?

Pray that God's mission—to seek and to save the lost—will be the top priority of all Christians, in all churches, including the United Methodist Church around the world.

[Pause for a few minutes to do pray, reflect, write, or draw. Be attentive and receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Are there particular people or places or situations in the world that you feel led to pray for now?]

THANKSGIVING

As close our three-hour prayer experience, give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ—the Word of God made flesh—full of grace and truth. Give thanks to the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us—teaching us everything that Jesus taught the first disciples. Silently offer your prayer of thanksgiving.

[Pause for a minute or two of silent prayer. The leader might want to conclude this time with The Lord's Prayer.

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