

Zion Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, PA /November 8, 2023
WOW (Worship On Wednesday) – FALL SERIES - 12:10pm Service of the Word
“KNEELING WITH GIANTS – Learning to Pray with History’s Best Teachers”

Based on the book of the same name by Gary Neal Hansen

Praying with Agnes Sanford: The Healing Light

Welcome & Announcements

Opening Versicles

L O Lord, open my lips.

C **and my mouth shall declare Your praise.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

L Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for self-examination

C **I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed; wherefore I pray to God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

L The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. Amen.

Prayer

L The Lord be with you,

C **And also with you.**

L Let us pray: Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may never forget you, but remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

Scripture Readings:

James 5:13-18

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one

who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

John 14:12-13

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Readings from Agnes Sanford

From "The Healing Light"

When we ask for the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in the body, let us think of that part of the body that most needs His life. Let us imagine His light and life glowing there like a fire, shining like a light. Then through the rest of the day let us continually give thanks that His life is at work within us accomplishing His perfect will and recreating us after His image and likeness which is perfection.

Christ is the healer. No human being has the power to heal. Christ loves all of us; and sends His love through us to His children according to His will. If we quiet ourselves and let Him speak, we will not go wrong.

From "The Healing Gifts of the Spirit"

I say a prayer of the utmost simplicity. ... And I make in words little pictures of thankful expectance that He is thus entering and healing the soul. Why should I not give thanks? Is not the healing of the soul the very purpose of His holy sacrifice on Calvary? Is it not, then, His will and the will of the Father? What could stop it?

Homily

The Prayers

L Show us your mercy, O Lord,

C **and grant us your salvation.**

L Clothe your ministers with righteousness.

C **Let your people sing with joy.**

L Give peace, O Lord, in all the world,
C **for only in you can we live in safety.**
L Lord, keep this nation under your care.
C **and guide us in the way of justice and truth.**

L Let your way be known upon the earth;
C **your saving health among all nations.**

L Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten,
C **nor the hope of the poor be taken away.**

L Create in us clean hearts, O God,
C **and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.**

L *Additional petitions offered...*

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

L Lord, remember us in your kingdom and reach us to pray:

C **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. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction

L Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

L The Lord almighty bless us and direct our days and our deeds in his peace.

C **Amen.**

Additional Teaching & Resources on Agnes Sanford's *The Healing Light* From *Kneeling with Giants* by Gary Neal Hansen (with adaptations)

Teachers of intercessory prayer usually emphasize that God's promise to answer requires that we have faith. Sanford's great gift is that her approaches build faith. She teaches practical things that we can do to pray joyfully and confidently rather than in desperation and despair. This is a major virtue. It gets us out of a paradox: Jesus promises to answer if we pray with true faith, but we know our faith is weak. And we cannot manufacture the faith we need, as both Paul and our daily experience agree. So Jesus' promise provides little comfort. Even less comforting is being told by some well-meaning Christian that our heartfelt prayer went unanswered because we did not have enough faith.

Sanford would agree that faith is required, and I think she would agree that faith comes as a gift. She knows, though, that God can give a gift as a seed; it needs to be watered to grow. She teaches us how to tend and nurture faith. Then with a deep sense of God's goodness and active concern, we can approach God confidently. A growing faith changes us. We can rest in God's care, no matter how God responds to a particular request; we do not need God to give us our way. With a heart full of trust, we can also relax and see what God really does answer.

THE BASIC PROCESS

Step one: Connect to God, and deepen the connection.

Step two: Make a specific request, and move to thankfulness.

Step three: Be present and focus on God. ... While present with the sick person, the focus is to be on God – certainly not the person praying, but not even on the sick person. Sanford advises those praying for someone's healing not to try to think too hard or put their prayers into perfect words. She tells of receiving this advice from someone more experienced with healing when she was dealing with a challenging situation. Her advisor told her to simply be with the sick boy and lay her hands on his head, knowing that God is God and that God is present. She gives the same advice to others.

Step Four: Make it a joyful game. ... Sanford tells the sick and their would-be healers that they should not take the process too terribly seriously. We should not be flippant – healing is God's holy work – but we should be joyful.

USING YOUR IMAGINATION IN PRAYER

Imagining the completion of healing. ... Sanford would have us substitute the hopeful picture of health restored. As we pray for a woman whose leg we know is broken, we imagine it strong.

Imagining the process of healing. ... Here is her own explanation: "When we ask for the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in the body, let us think of that part of the body that most need His life. Let us imagine His light and life glowing there like a fire, shining there like a light."

Additional Resource On Healing Prayer:

From Commentary on the Occasional Services: A Companion to Lutheran Book of Worship

When the rite of Laying on of Hands and Anointing the Sick is employed, care must be taken not to suggest that physical healing must follow from its use nor to suggest that those who do not experience physical healing have not found favor with God. The service is not to burden consciences, but to expand our understanding of God's goodness, care, and concern.

From Occasional Services: A Companion to Lutheran Book of Worship/Laying on of Hands and Anointing the Sick. We are here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who restored the

sick to health and who himself suffered for our sake. He is present among us still to heal and to make whole. We entrust or *brother/sister*, name _____, to the grace and power of Jesus Christ, that the Lord may ease *his/her* suffering and grant *him/her* salvation. ... I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you and fill you with his grace, that you may know the healing power of his love. Amen.