

Conversation Starter

FOR the week of February 10 to 16, 2008

This Week's Theme: Be Constant In Prayer

Reading #1: Colossians 4:2-4
Reading #2: Matthew 4:1-11
Reading #3: Ephesians 6:18

Wednesday, February 6th this year was the first day of a new season in the church year known as Lent. At Trinity we observed the beginning of Lent, also known as Ash Wednesday, with two worship services that included the placing of ashes on people's foreheads. Historically when people allowed themselves to receive this symbol of ashes, it was a sign of their commitment to spend time drawing closer to God by fasting and through prayers of confession and repentance. The practice of fasting and the discipline of prayer has been and continues to be an essential part in observing Lent for many Christians. For them, it is an intentional way to fulfill the biblical call to be constant in prayer.

In order to support the personal prayer times of Trinity members during Lent, a prayer calendar was distributed in a recent bulletin. In this calendar was a challenge to pray regularly during Lent. And why? Because if we grow in our commitment to pray, we will not only see a positive difference in our personal lives, but in our parish, and in our witness in the community and the world as well. Use the these prayer calendars provides one way to be constant in prayer during Lent.

The call to us to be constant in prayer was also clearly found in both of Sunday's scripture readings. In the New Testament lesson from the apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians we find these words:

- Devote yourselves to prayer...(see Colossians 4:2)
- And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message... (see Colossians 4:3)
- [And] pray that I [Paul] may proclaim it clearly, as I should... (see Colossians 4:4)

And then in the gospel reading we find Jesus going into the desert for 40 days to do what? To fast and pray. (See Matthew 4:1-11) This is the Bible story on which the church's Lenten customs, including fasting and prayer, are based.

All this talk on prayer is a way to introduce our next sermon series which will continue throughout this year's Lenten season: Be Constant In Prayer – that is, be regular, unceasing, persistent, without pause or letup. Be Constant In Prayer – that is, be steadfast, be resolute, be purposeful and firm. Be Constant In Prayer – that is, be confident, unwavering, faithful, devoted to and unswerving. So now go and be constant in prayer as your Lenten season will be enriched by doing so.

1. Describe a meaningful time of prayer that was either on your own, with a friend, in a Fellowship Group or in a worship service at church.
2. How has God worked in your life as a result of your prayers?
3. How has God worked in the lives of others as a result of your prayers?
4. How might your prayer times change based on what being constant in prayer means?
5. If the Ephesians 6:18 reading provides us with another biblical call to be constant in prayer, then what does it mean to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions”? How do we pray “in the Spirit”?
6. What is a prayer request that has been “heavy” on your heart?