

40 Days of Preparation
A Guide for Reading, Meditation and Prayer
For all members preparing for Church/Charge Conference 2008
As we plan, pray and recognize our future
as the United Methodist Church in Oklahoma

Dear Faithful Local Church Leaders,

We are embarking on an extraordinary journey as we together “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” The Oklahoma Annual Conference in preparation for your Church/Charge Conference is asking all local church members to be involved in a 40 day period of prayer and preparation.

You are invited to join with your brothers and sisters in prayer this 40 days of preparation guide.

We are hopeful that these meditations will feed your soul. May our collective prayers form an amazing grace-filled foundation for your church/charge conference.

Using this Resource

This resource is designed for those who will participate in the 2008 Local Church/Charge Conference. Our aim is to actively seek God's will that we might fulfill God's mission for the church, to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world. This guide consists of forty entries, one for each day leading up to your local church/charge conference. If you are already keeping a spiritual journal, then you are invited to continue that and incorporate the content of this guide as you see fit. If you do not have a journal, we encourage you to print this document and allow the pages to guide your reading, meditation, prayer, and writing. In order to make translation and presentation easy, we have not included graphics or complex page formats. We believe the Holy Spirit will guide us as we reflect on the Scripture and the other documents created to prepare participants for this event.

Remember this 40-Day Preparation will not be easy! Temptations will come in various forms to interrupt your reading, meditation, and prayer. It may come disguised as a simple solution to a complex problem. You may be distracted by many matters of secondary importance which often keep leaders from investing time in the things that matter most. These temptations can be overcome by remaining faithful to the personal and corporate disciplines of prayer, reflection, and response.

We all are called to an intentional practice and way of living that will keep us connected to God, God's Word, God's people, and God's world. Please adapt these pages to a way of prayer and reflection that suits your own spiritual temperament and disciplines. Invest time in these shared spiritual exercises in preparation for your local church/charge conference.

In a letter to a struggling preacher, John Trambath, John Wesley wrote on August 17, 1760:

My Dear Brother,

The conversation I had with you yesterday in the afternoon, gave me a good deal of satisfaction. As to some things which I have heard, (with regard to your wasting your substance, drinking intemperately, and wronging the poor people at Silberton,) I am persuaded they were mistakes; as I suppose it was, that you converse much with careless, unawakened people. And I trust you will be more and more cautious in all these respects, abstaining from the very appearance of evil...

What has exceedingly hurt you in time past, nay, and I fear, to this day, is want of reading. I scarce ever knew a Preacher read so little. And perhaps, by neglecting it, you have lost the taste for it. Hence your talent in preaching does not increase. It is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. *Reading only can*

supply this, with meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep Preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. [emphasis added] You may acquire the taste which you may have not: What is tedious at first, will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days, and pretty superficial Preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer. Take up your cross, and be a Christian altogether. Then with all the children of God rejoice (not grieve) over you; and, in particular,

Yours, etc.
John Wesley

The 40 Days of Preparation is a call upon all the churches of the Oklahoma Annual Conference to take up the cross and accept our task to be disciples and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Prayerfully read the material and reflect on the questions. Allow adequate time for meditation and listen for God's Word in and through the words of Scripture and of the other writers. Write your responses here. The practice of spiritual journaling has proven effective throughout the centuries of Christian history, and has a particular place in the practice of John and Charles Wesley. It may be helpful to review your previous days' reflections and note the changes and additions to what you think or see or feel. God can speak to you in and through this practice.

Remember during these forty days you will be joining many who love God and who pray for you. May the Holy Spirit empower us to love God and our neighbor in ways beyond anything we have ever experienced before, with all our heart and mind and strength.

Day 40-

Pray for guidance and discernment. If you wish, write that prayer here and use it for the next seven days.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 slowly and prayerfully. What words or phrases stand out for you?

What do you think was Jesus' intention as He spoke these words to the disciples?

How much authority do you allow Jesus to have in your life?

(Circle one number below on a scale from 1 to 10)

1 = little authority 10=absolute authority

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What could you do today to move up one number?

Pray for all who will participate in the decision of our Church/Charge Conference. Pray particularly for all to hear clearly God's voice for our future.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore you attempt to pray, see that it be your one design to commune with God, to lift up your heart to him, to pour out your soul before him... Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side of eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of others for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear... an abomination unto the Lord."

"Sermon on the Mount – VI",
II.1,2.

Day 39-

Begin this day with the prayer for guidance and discernment which you wrote on Day 40.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 slowly and prayerfully. Try to hear this command of Jesus as if it were your first time. What challenges you or scares you in this call from Jesus on your life?

Meditate on the fact that Jesus has given us authority to tell others the message of salvation. Jesus has given YOU authority. What does this really mean to you?

This is God's commandment, an order from our Commander-in-Chief. What specific steps would you need to take to become a disciple-maker?

What specific steps would our local church need to take to become disciple-makers?

Pray for our congregation to be united in purpose and ready to embrace that which God is calling us to do.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"That religion is an inward principle; that it is no other than the mind that was in Christ; or, in other words, the renewal of the soul after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness." As Charles Wesley put it in a hymn prayer, they longed for Christ to

Plant, and root, and fix in me
All the mind that was in Thee.

Day 38-

Begin with the prayer for guidance and discernment you wrote on Day 40.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 slowly and prayerfully. What have you done specifically to fulfill this Great Commission since beginning this time of prayer? (Remember listing and praying for specific persons, is a first step in moving towards fulfillment)

Jesus' authority comes to us with an awesome promise-He is with us always. How does that fact affect you in your realm of influence today?

What could happen if every disciple, in our church, made a deliberate decision to make "the Great Commission" of Jesus as their call to disciple making?

¶601 in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2004 states:
"The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church, all to the glory of God".

Pray for our Church/Charge Conference as we together fully accept this stated purpose making it our own.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"We find a continual increase of faith and strength. It is good for us to be assaulted by Satan and his children. They watch *for* our halting, which makes us watch *against* it."

Thursday, April 30, 1743; Charles Wesley's Journal, vol, 1
page 270.

Day 37-

Begin with the prayer for guidance and discernment which you wrote on Day 40.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 slowly and prayerfully. What words impact you as you read this passage?

Jesus said to "go and make disciples of all nations". Who are the groups of people or nations that you have excluded in your prayer time that need to hear the Gospel?

What one country has God placed on your heart for prayer today? Why not pray for the missionaries in that country? Why not take time to look up information about the people that God has placed before you?

¶601 in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2004 states:

"The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church, all to the glory of God".

Pray for God to guide our church/charge conference to embrace our purpose and truly equip our church to bring glory to God.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Let all mankind in Christ rejoice!
Our Jesus is gone up on high,
And gifts He hath received for men,
He sends His Spirit to purify
Our souls from every sinful stain.

Teachers He gives our souls to feed,
The word of truth and grace to impart,
Dispensers of the living bread,
And pastors after His own heart.

He makes them apt to teach, and guide
The flock with wisdom from above,
Till all are wholly sanctified
Through faith, and perfected in love.

The Poetical Works of John and Charles
Wesley, vol, 5, page 317f

Day 36-

Begin with the prayer for guidance and discernment you wrote on Day 40.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 slowly and prayerfully. What commands are found in this passage?

List the name of one family member or someone in our community that needs to hear about Jesus today. Why not let them know that you are praying for them? Send an email, send a card, call on the phone or better yet visit in person.

What will you do to make the Sabbath holy?

Pray for our local church as it embraces the message that we are organized not for the members within but organized to equip ourselves that we go out and make disciples of those outside our fellowship.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

The Wesleyan "means of grace" include worship, singing, prayer, searching the Scripture, Christian Conference, fasting or abstinence, small groups for mutual accountability and support, and regular participation in works of mercy and justice. This is a picture of a Christian life shaped by joyful obedience. These practices are to take place in all three areas of our Christian life; e.g. worship is to include our personal times to worship God, our family time for worship, and our worship together as the church (the body of Christ). In the same manner, prayer is understood to include personal prayer, family prayer and prayer together as the church (the body of Christ). Searching the scriptures would include personal reading, meditation and immediately putting into practice what has been revealed to us as an individual, to our family, and together as the church (the body of Christ).

Day 35-

Begin with the prayer for guidance and discernment you wrote on Day 40.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 slowly and prayerfully. What comfort do you have in knowing that God is with you always?

How does knowing that God is with us always help us in fulfilling the command to “go and make disciples of all nations”?

Where are you feeling challenged in fulfilling Jesus’ Great Commission?

Has there been any change in the scale for 1 to 10 as to Jesus’ authority which you considered on Day 40? Why or why not?

¶601 in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2004 states:
“The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church, all to the glory of God”.

Pray for our 2008 Church/Charge Conference that God will hold us true to our purpose as to making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

John and Charles Wesley learned from the Moravians the value and power of allowing lay leaders (both men and women) to participate in God’s mission. As early as June 15, 1740, John’s journal records meeting with “men and women leaders” (also July 27, 1740, etc.). These regular meetings allowed the Wesleys the opportunity to listen and learn. It also provided them the opportunity to teach and train lay leaders. What are the structures currently in place to nurture and support the leaders in our local church?

Day 33-

After reflecting on the prayer you wrote on Day 40, write a new prayer for God's guidance and God's wisdom. Claim James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you." Use this prayer for the next seven days.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully. What words and phrases stand out for you?

List some of the positive characteristics of the "body" to which God has called you. Share at least one of these with someone else today.

What gifts do you have that would build up the church? (Often your immediate family or friends can help you to determine what gifts these might be)

Pray for God to keep our local church united as one body and to serve the Lord more fully as we make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore you attempt to pray, see that it be your one design to commune with God, to lift up your heart to him, to pour out your soul before him... Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side of eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of others for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear... an abomination unto the Lord." "Sermon on the Mount – VI", II.1,2

Day 32-

Begin with the prayer for wisdom that you wrote on Day 33.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully.

According to the verses for Romans 12:4-8, how are these gifts to be used?

Pray for our 2008 Church/Charge Conference that we be united as one body and that we fully recognize our call from God to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"We find a continual increase of faith and strength. It is good for us to be assaulted by Satan and his children. They watch *for* our halting, which makes us watch *against* it."

Thursday, April 30, 1743; Charles Wesley's Journal, vol, 1
page 270.

Day 31-

Begin with the prayer for wisdom that you wrote on Day 33.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully. Name the gifted people in our local church who helped to build up the body of Christ?

How can our local church members work together, as one body, to serve our church? Our world?

What could be the outcome if our church actively walked out these verses?

Allow yourself to imagine a church, where there are no comparisons, just members serving the Lord generously, cheerfully, diligently, mercifully... What would be the first step in moving our church in that direction?

Pray for our Church/Charge Conference they we will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"The soul and body make a man [human], the Spirit and discipline make a Christian."

Journal of John Wesley for August 17, 1750.

Day 30-

Begin with the prayer for wisdom that you wrote on Day 33.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully. What spiritual gifts do you thank God for that are evidenced in our local church?

Why do you feel it was important for Paul to remind the Romans that we are one body?

What happens when the physical body develops cancer and goes out of control?

Pray that God will remove all cancers or pre-cancerous concerns in our local church body, in our district and our annual conference.

Pray for God's will and direction for our church.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Stir up the gift of God which is in you; gather together those that have been scattered abroad, and make up a band, if not a class or two. Your best way would be to visit from house to house. By this means you can judge of their conduct and dispositions in domestic life, and may have opportunity to speak to the young of the family. By motion you will contract warmth; by imparting life, you will increase it in yourself... bear your cross, and it will bear you..."

Letter from John Wesley to Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis, January 18, 1774.

Day 29-

Begin with the prayer for wisdom that you wrote on Day 33.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully. What inspiration is God giving you from these verses?

Read through a list of names of persons in our local church, our district and/or annual conference. Say a prayer for these persons asking God how you might encourage them today.

What is it about God's grace that you are thankful for?

Who are the persons in your life that are sharing their spiritual gifts in helping the whole body to function? Write their names and what gift(s) they share.

What specific gift is God challenging you to use as an active member of the body of Christ?

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"God does nothing but in answer to prayer; and even they who have been converted to God without praying for it themselves, (which is exceeding rare,) were not without the prayers of others. Every new victory which a soul gains is the effect of a new prayer."

John Wesley, Plain Account of Christian Perfection, 1777, Q37, A.5.

Day 28-

Begin with the prayer for wisdom that you wrote on Day 33.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully. Notice how each gift is given to be actively used in the body. Which gift(s) are you actively using or not using?

How can we, as the church body, encourage our children and young adults to develop their spiritual gifts?

What happens when everyone in the body of Christ is actively using their gift?

What happens when believers choose to hide their gifts or leave them dormant?

Pray for God to make us one body, as a local church and Annual Conference.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

To whom should thy disciples go,
Of Whom should they be taught,
 but thee?
Thy Spirit doth thy meaning show;
O might he show it now to me,
And give my heart to understand
The new, the old, supreme command.

Blessing thou dost to sinners give,
Not sacrifice from us require;
Thou will'st that we should still receive,
Should after all thy mind aspire,
And moulded in thine image prove
Thy first great attribute is love.

Day 27-

Begin with the prayer for wisdom that you wrote on Day 33. Please take time to write a new prayer for our Church/Charge Conference.

Read Romans 12:4-8 slowly and prayerfully. What is your part in the body of Christ?

Part of the baptismal vows which we receive at baptism state "To remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries." ¶217.4 The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2004. What are you personally doing to strengthen the ministries of our local church?

Pray that they will be sensitive to God's Spirit and ready to work together as one body to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

If grafted into Thee, the Vine,
I bring forth fruit, the praise is Thine:
But use Thy sin-retrenching power,
Prune me that I may bring forth more;
That through Thy Spirit's grace, I may
The truth with all my heart obey.

Kindly Thou dost chastise, reprove,
The objects of Thy choicest love,
That thus we may Thy mind express,
Partakers of Thy holiness,
May meekly all Thy sufferings share,
And fruit unto perfection bear.

Day 26-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27 that includes every aspect of our Church/Charge Conference.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. What do the talents symbolize for you?

What property, or talent, has God entrusted to you? To our church?

What is the importance of the phrase "after a long time" in verse 19?

Pray for God's will and that we will be one body in Christ.

Pray that we will be sensitive to God's Spirit and ready to work together not hiding their talents but using them to better serve the Lord as faithful makers of disciples.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Dost thou know what religion is? That it is a participation of the divine nature, the life of God in the soul of man: 'Christ formed in the heart', 'Christ in thee, the hope of glory'; happiness and holiness; heaven begun upon earth; 'a kingdom of God within thee', 'not meat and drink', no outward thing, 'but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'; an everlasting kingdom brought into thy soul, a 'peace of God that passeth all understanding'; a 'joy unspeakable and full of glory'?

Charles Wesley's sermon: *Awake, Thou That Sleepest*, II. 10

Day 25-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. What are the signs of a faithful servant?

What steps would you have to take to become a more faithful servant today?

Why was the Master so hard on the servant who hid the one talent?

What are you doing with the talents that have been entrusted to you? In our local church?

Pray for God's will and that we will be one body in Christ investing fully the talents we have been given.

Pray that we will be sensitive to God's Spirit and ready to work together not hiding their talents but using them to better serve the Lord as faithful makers of disciples.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore you attempt to pray, see that it be your one design to commune with God, to lift up your heart to him, to pour out your soul before him... Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side of eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of others for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear... an abomination unto the Lord."

"Sermon on the Mount – VI", II.1,2.

Day 24-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. What has the Lord given you charge of today?

What steps according to this scripture does a person have to take to be called a "good and faithful servant"?

How do offense and fear "bury" our faith and make it dormant and unfruitful?
How do those things affect the growth of our church?

Pray for God's guidance for all those attending our Church/Charge Conference.
Pray for God's will and that we will be one body in Christ investing fully the talents we have been given.

Pray that we will be sensitive to God's Spirit and ready to work together not hiding their talents but using them to better serve the Lord as faithful makers of disciples.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

O Love Divine, what has Thou done!
The' immortal God hath died for me!
The Father's co-eternal Son
Bore all my sins upon the tree;
The' immortal God for me hath died!
My Lord, my Love is crucified!

Is crucified for me and you,
To bring us rebels near to God'
Believe, believe the record true:
We all are bought with Jesu's blood;
Pardon for all flows from His side;
My Lord, my Love is crucified!

Day 23-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. What does it mean to you to share in the master's happiness?

The third servant was offended, judgmental and afraid. How did these attitudes affect the servant's life? Do you need God to release you from fear, offense, or a judgmental spirit?

If you are offended, look up and meditate on Psalm 119:165. What does this mean to you?

The third servant was afraid because the master did not love. The servant did not know, and therefore trust the master. Ask God to help you act with love today. When we act in love-we can transform the world.

Pray that we will work together as we embrace our purpose to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

If grafted into Thee, the Vine,
I bring forth fruit, the praise is Thine:
But use Thy sin-retrenching power,
Prune me that I may bring forth more;
That through Thy Spirit's grace, I may
The truth with all my heart obey.

Kindly Thou dost chastise, reprove,
The objects of Thy choicest love,
That thus we may Thy mind express,
Partakers of Thy holiness,
May meekly all Thy sufferings share,
And fruit unto perfection bear.

Day 22-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. What could the third servant have done to better understand the Master?

What steps do you need to take to understand the Master more fully?

Name some of the faithful servants that have been witnesses to you of faithfulness? Consider voicing a prayer of thankfulness to God for those great servants and where possible express a word of appreciation.

Pray today for those in leadership of our Church. Our pastor, staff members, and our church leaders.

Pray for God to help us work together as we embrace our purpose to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

God of all-sufficient grace,
My God in Christ thou art;
Bid me walk before thy face
Till I am pure in heart;
Till, transformed by faith divine,
I gain that perfect love unknown,
Bright in all thy image shine,
By putting on thy Son.

Day 21-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. What abilities has God given to you to make disciples of Jesus Christ?

Name some of the talents and blessings God has given you?

Take time to thank God for the blessings and ask God to help you determine if you are using or burying your talents.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, I shall be done.

Before Thee I my heart persuade,
I know that Thou art true,
Fully assured what Thou hast said
Thou able art to do.

Day 20-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 27.

Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly and prayerfully. Why did Jesus take time to share this parable with His followers?

Where are you investing yourself in God's world? Is this an investment for your own acknowledgement or for the Lord?

Which of the three servants do you best identify?

How is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do more with the talents?

Pray for our local church to realize what God is calling us to be in 2009 and beyond.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Dost thou know what religion is? That it is a participation of the divine nature, the life of God in the soul of man: 'Christ formed in the heart', 'Christ in thee, the hope of glory'; happiness and holiness; heaven begun upon earth; 'a kingdom of God within thee', 'not meat and drink', no outward thing, 'but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'; an everlasting kingdom brought into thy soul, a 'peace of God that passeth all understanding'; a 'joy unspeakable and full of glory'?

Charles Wesley's sermon: Awake, Thou That Sleepest, II. 10.

Day 19-

Reflect on the prayers you wrote on Day 40, Day 33, and Day 26 write a new prayer for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart. Read Luke 18:1-8. Then write a new prayer for this week.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. What inspiration is God giving you from these verses?

Why did Jesus use such a small seed for His example of the Kingdom?

What is our responsibility as disciples in taking the seed and planting it?

Where have I planted "kingdom seeds" in my world?

Pray for God to help you grasp the vision of what it means for our local church to be seed planters.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Righteous in Himself, the Lord
Only righteousness approves;
Sinners, by His grace restored,
Truly justified, He loves;
Grants them here the perfect grace,
Pure in heart to see His face.

Day 18-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 17 for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. How does this parable apply to you personally? What truths can you think about today-and apply?

Do you compare yourself to others in terms of opportunity or results? Ask God to show you how to become a "kingdom seed" planter in your field.

Small beginning-huge results. Results that make a home for the birds of the air. Pray for God to give you a huge vision for own community.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Purity of intention characterizes the essence of the Christian life. This means that your one, your singular desire is to please God in all thoughts, words, and actions. Thomas à Kempis, in his masterpiece of Christian devotion, *The Imitation of Christ*, gives us a marvelous image. Simplicity and purity are the two wings that lift the soul up to heaven. Simplicity relates to our intention. Purity describes our affections (II,iv. 1-3). Purity of heart and clarity of intention define life as God has intended it to be lived. ... God's grace is necessary in all our efforts to aim at love, to please God, and to fulfill God's will in all things, great and small. But that which God required, God provides; all is then light and our souls are lifted up to the heaven of love.

From *Practicing a Methodist PRAYER: 52 Meditations for Today* by Paul W. Chilcote (Upper Room Books, forthcoming in 2008)

God of almighty love,
By whose sufficient grace
I lift my heart to things above,
And humbly seek thy face;
Through Jesus Christ the just
My faint desires receive,
And let me in thy goodness trust,
And to thy glory live.

Whate'er I say or do,
Thy glory be my aim;
My offerings all be offered through
The ever-blessed Name!
Jesu, my single eye
Be fixed on thee alone;
Thy name be praised on earth, on high,
Thy will by all be done!

Day 17-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 19 for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. The Amplified Bible states verse 32 this way: "Of all the seeds it is the smallest, but when it has grown, it is the largest of the garden herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and find shelter in its branches." In light of this translation, what is the very practical purpose of "kingdom seed" planting?

List the ways that you have inhibited "kingdom seed" growth in the fields God has given you.

Pray for our 2008 Church/Charge Conference to be one where we truly focus on "kingdom seed" growth.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore you attempt to pray, see that it be your one design to commune with God, to lift up your heart to him, to pour out your soul before him... Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side of eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of others for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear... an abomination unto the Lord."

"Sermon on the Mount – VI", II.1.2.

Day 16-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 19 for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. What "field" has God given you to plant "kingdom seeds"?

What could you do to help you remember that your task is to be planting "kingdom seeds"?

Who helped to plant the "kingdom seed" in your life? Write the names here and then think of some way to give appreciation to them. (telephone, email, in person, and tell God to bless them this day)

Wisdom from the Wesleys

The Covenant Prayer

I am not longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt,

rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou are mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven, Amen.

Record your thoughts, feelings and emotions related to this prayer. Write or draw as you feel led.

Day 15-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 19 for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. Why did Jesus use such imagery?

What would be your description of the "kingdom seed" be? Where does your description of the "kingdom seed" differ from that found in the scripture?

What do you need to do today to be a better planter of the "kingdom seeds"?

Wisdom from the Wesleys

'Tis done: my all-redeeming, Lord,
I have gone forth, and preach'd the
word,
The sinners to Thy feast are come,
And yet, O Saviour, there is room.

Go then, my Lord again enjoin'd,
And other wandering sinners find;
Go to the hedges and highways,
And offer all My pardoning grace.

The worst unto My supper press,
Monsters of daring wickedness,
Tell them My grace for all is free,
They cannot be too bad for Me.

Tell every creature under heaven
I died to save them from all sin,
And force the vagrants to come in.

Ye vagrant souls, on you I call,
(O that my voice could reach you all!)
Ye all are freely justified,
Ye all may live, for Christ hath died.

My message as from God receive,
Ye all may come to Christ, and live:
O let His love your hearts constrain,
Nor suffer Him to die in vain.

His love is mighty to compel,
His conquering love consent to feel,
Yield to His love's resistless power,
And fight against your God no more
Tell them, their sins are all forgiven,

Write your reflections on Charles
Wesley's extended verse. What would
the message of this hymn mean to in
The United Methodist Church today?

Day 14-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 19 for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. Ask God to help you see something new in the verses.

Where are you seeing "Kingdom Seed" planting in our church?

What attributes has someone shown to you that symbolizes "kingdom seed" planting?

Pray for our Church/Charge Conference to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore you attempt to pray, see that it be your one design to commune with God, to lift up your heart to him, to pour out your soul before him... Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side of eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of others for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear... an abomination unto the Lord."

"Sermon on the Mount – VI", II.1,2

Day 13-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 19 for God's guidance and a deeper understanding of the courage and persistence needed to pray and not lose heart.

Read Matthew 13:31-32 slowly and prayerfully. As you focus on this scripture what field(s) has God given you to plant "kingdom seeds"?

What is still needed to prepare your field for planting the seed?

Those who plant "kingdom seeds" are also caring for their own nourishment. What are you doing to keep yourself spiritually healthy and ready to serve?

What do you see is the purpose for Jesus to describe the mustard seed growing into a tree that branches out and birds may perch on its branches?

Wisdom from the Wesleys

See Him set forth before your eyes,
Behold the bleeding Sacrifice!
His offer'd love make haste to' embrace,
And freely now be saved by grace.

Ye who believe His record true
Shall sup with Him, and He with you:
Come to the feast; be saved from sin,
For Jesus waits to take you in.

This is the time, no more delay,
This is the acceptable day,
Come in, this moment, at His call,
And live for Him who died for all.

What insights and emotions come to you? What is God calling you to do in response? Journal your thoughts, feelings and reflections. You may want to draw or write your own hymn or verse in response to the meditations of these last five days.

Day 12-

Write a prayer asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to our new conference year.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. What could happen if our church had a fresh move of the Holy Spirit like the Day of Pentecost?

What are the steps you would have to take to allow the Holy Spirit to be activated in your life? In our church?

Pray for God's abiding presence and power.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"That religion is an inward principle; that it is no other than the mind that was in Christ; or, in other words, the renewal of the soul after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness." As Charles Wesley put it in a hymnic prayer, they longed for Christ to

Plant, and root, and fix in me
All the mind that was in Thee.

Day 11-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to our new conference year.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. Imagine what would happen if at church/charge conference this year we were of one mind. Write thoughts as to how we would be different?

How are you preparing your heart, mind and soul to be open to a fresh move of the Holy Spirit?

Pray for your pastor(s) and lay leadership(s) that they will await the Holy Spirit's direction.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"We find a continual increase of faith and strength. It is good for us to be assaulted by Satan and his children. They watch *for* our halting, which makes us watch *against* it."

Thursday, April 30, 1743; Charles Wesley's Journal, vol, 1 page 270.

Day 10-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. Why do you think there was such a manifestation on the day of Pentecost? How did it impact the people?

After their Pentecost experience the disciples moved forward in holy boldness. Where do you see the need for "holy boldness" in our world?

Pray that our local church will take the challenge to move towards holy boldness in working to transform the world.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"The soul and body make a man [human], the Spirit and discipline make a Christian."

Journal of John Wesley for August 17, 1750

Day 9-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. The beginning of the church was this move of the Holy Spirit. What move of the Holy Spirit is needed in our local church?

Why did the writer of Acts feel it was important to share the many foreign lands that were present on that day?

Pray that God will help our church be a people who look outside our four walls.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

Let all mankind in Christ rejoice!
Our Jesus is gone up on high,
And gifts He hath received for men,
He sends His Spirit to purify
Our souls from every sinful stain.

Teachers He gives our souls to feed,
The word of truth and grace to impart,
Dispensers of the living bread,
And pastors after His own heart.

He makes them apt to teach, and guide
The flock with wisdom from above,
Till all are wholly sanctified
Through faith, and perfected in love.

The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, vol, 5, page 317f

Day 8-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. The disciples waited upon the Lord in Jerusalem for that great day to come. What steps does our church need to take so that we will be known as a people who waited on the Lord?

Verse 12 states the people were "amazed and perplexed they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'" Let us pray that God will ready our hearts as we move forward into ministry.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore you attempt to pray, see that it be your one design to commune with God, to lift up your heart to him, to pour out your soul before him... Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side of eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of others for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear... an abomination unto the Lord."

"Sermon on the Mount – VI", II.1,2

Day 7-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. Where would our church be without the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Where have you found the Holy Spirit's power and guidance in your life this week?

Pray that God will lead us as a local church to be a people filled with God's power and guidance.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"Stir up the gift of God which is in you; gather together those that have been scattered abroad, and make up a band, if not a class or two. Your best way would be to visit from house to house. By this means you can judge of their conduct and dispositions in domestic life, and may have opportunity to speak to the young of the family. By motion you will contract warmth; by imparting life, you will increase it in yourself... bear your cross, and it will bear you..."

Letter from John Wesley to Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis, January 18, 1774

Day 6-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to our new conference year.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. How many of the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit? What does this mean for us today?

How have you seen evidence of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Where are the evidences of the Holy Spirit's guidance seen in our local church?

Pray for God to reveal the Holy Spirit in us and throughout 2009.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

"God does nothing but in answer to prayer; and even they who have been converted to God without praying for it themselves, (which is exceeding rare,) were not without the prayers of others. Every new victory which a soul gains is the effect of a new prayer."

John Wesley, Plain Account of Christian Perfection, 1777, Q37, A.5.

Day 5-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. Where has the Holy Spirit guided you in the past?

Each disciple was filled and began to speak out for God. How are you speaking out for God in your home, and in our church?

Pray that God will help us all accept the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

The Wesleyan "means of grace" include worship, singing, prayer, searching the Scripture, Christian Conference, fasting or abstinence, small groups for mutual accountability and support, and regular participation in works of mercy and justice. This is a picture of a Christian life shaped by joyful obedience. And these practices are to take place in all three areas of our Christian life; e.g. worship is to include our personal times to worship God, our family time for worship, and our worship together as the church (the body of Christ). In the same manner, prayer is understood to include personal prayer, family prayer and prayer together as the church (the body of Christ). Searching the scriptures would include personal reading, meditation and immediately putting into practice what has been revealed to us as an individual, to our family, and together as the church (the body of Christ).

Day 4-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. What is God telling us as disciples to do with this passage of scripture?

What hindrances do you have that keep you from sharing your faith with others?

¶601 in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2004 states:

“The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church, all to the glory of God”.

Pray for our 2008 Church/Charge Conference as we together fully accept this stated purpose making it our own.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

In the Minutes of Several Conversations between John and Charles Wesley and their leaders, the question was asked:

Q. 3. What may we reasonably believe to be God's design in raising up the Preachers called Methodists?

N. Not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.

Quoted from the “Minutes of Several Conversations between Mr. Wesley and Others from the Year 1744, to the Year 1789”; Works (Jackson edition) 8:325-6.

Day 3-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully.

Imagine a church focused on the goal: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world", list one or two ways that our mission statement corresponds to this passage from Act 2?

Three days from the 2008 Church/Charge Conference. Pray that God will ready our hearts to act as one body centered on the Lord.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

(Describing a Christian man, the same would be true for a Christian woman).
But as soon as he is born of God... the 'eyes of his understanding are opened'... And... he sees 'the light of the glory of God', his glorious love, 'in the face of Jesus Christ'. His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee': 'Go and sin no more.'... He is now ready to hear whatsoever 'he that teacheth man knowledge' is pleased from time to time to reveal to him. He 'feels in his heart' (to use the language of our Church) 'the mighty working of the Spirit of God'. ... inwardly sensible of, the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He feels, he is conscious of, a 'peace which passeth all understanding'. He many times feels such a joy in God as is 'unspeakable and full of glory'. He feels 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him'. And all his spiritual senses are then 'exercised to discern' spiritual 'good and evil'. By the use of these he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and of all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom. And now he may properly be said to live: God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ. ... God is continually breathing, as it were, upon his soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and a praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained: and the child of God grows up, till he comes to 'the full measure of the stature of Christ'.

John Wesley's sermon on The New Birth, II.4.

Day 2-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully. Write about the feelings of the disciples as they awaited the move of the Holy Spirit.

How do these feelings relate to our preparation for our church/charge conference?

Just two days until the 2008 Church/Charge Conference. Pray that God will ready our hearts to act as one body centered on the Lord.

Wisdom from the Wesleys

(Describing a transformed man, the same would be true for a transformed woman).

... it may easily be observed that the substance of all these figurative expressions is comprised in that one word 'faith', taken in its widest sense; being enjoyed, more or less, by everyone that believes in the name of the Son of God. This change from spiritual death to spiritual life is properly the new birth; all the particulars whereof are admirably well expressed by Dr. Watts in one verse:

Give me new passions, joys and fears,
And turn the stone to flesh.

But before this universal change... we have need to take great care, not, on the one hand, to despise the day of small things, nor, on the other, to mistake any of these partial changes for that entire, general change, the new birth; that total change from the image of the earthly Adam into the image of the heavenly, from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind into the mind that was in Christ.

JW Sermon, On living Without God, paragraphs 11 and 12.

Day 1-

Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 12 asking God to touch our local church with the Holy Spirit and that we will be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we look to 2009.

Read Acts 2:1-12 slowly and prayerfully.

Let us thank God for the prayers of the people related to our church/charge conference. Make us one Lord Jesus, we want to be united in you.

Remember to ask our entire congregation to join us in prayer as we together seek the Holy Spirit's leading for our 2009.

Wisdom from the Wesleys**The Covenant Prayer**

I am not longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt,

rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,

exalted for thee or brought low by thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

thou are mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

let it be ratified in heaven, Amen.

Record your thoughts, feelings and emotions related to this prayer. Write or draw as you feel led.