

Being the Church in Christ:

Wisdom from Pastor Paul

(The Brentwood Sermon Series for 2015)

Memorize & Ponder Text – Philippians 1:3-5

(Full Reading – Philippians 1:1-11)

Week of Sept 13-20, 2015

Praying for the Church

Philippians 1:3-5 (NRSV)

I thank my God every time I remember you,
constantly praying with joy
in every one of my prayers for all of you,
because of your sharing in the gospel
from the first day until now.

*Throughout 2015, the Christian community at Brentwood Presbyterian Church will be considering how to be the church in Jesus Christ, guided by the wisdom of Pastor Paul. We invite you to **listen** for what the Spirit is saying in the text, then **question** how those insights might change the ways you see things and act in the world. Share your thoughts during the week on the meaning the Spirit creates for you in this text by posting a comment on our website – www.brentwoodpc.ca.*

A Provocative Pondering

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us provoke one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together ... (Hebrews 10:23-25a)

Paul believes fervently in the power of prayer. It is, quite simply, conversation with God.

Three things in particular about Paul's approach to prayer strike me as worth pondering this week.

First, Paul's focus in prayer is most frequently on his joy at what God is doing in and with the church. Paul prays for, and wants us to pray for, the church in the same way – with joy and gratitude. This church he loves so deeply, serves so patiently, and builds so persistently, is the body, the physical presence, of Jesus Christ in the world. It shares in the mission of God for the world. It walks in the Spirit with the world in order to witness to the reality of the new age God initiated in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that unique intervention in human history that delivers justice, peace, and beauty.

Second, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he crafted the Lord's Prayer, as good a model of praying for the church in its mission for the world as we can find. Take your bulletin home today and pray the Lord's Prayer at least once every day this week. Savor the things Jesus prays for – the eternal power of God, the reality of the Kingdom or Commonwealth of God, the wellbeing of all humans in all dimensions of their energy – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. These are the realities that created the church and that it serves.

Third, prayer, in whatever form you may use, keeps us in touch with our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer as a friend, an intimate companion, who is steadfastly understanding, forgiving, and encouraging. To enjoy that kind of support is life itself and nourishes the flourishing of both church and world.