



Listening, Praying & Discerning

We are coming together as a congregation to listen for how God is calling and leading First United Church, Waterloo. We spend time in prayer to intentionally come near to God and to loosen our attachment to what we want to see happen. When this occurs, we develop the muscle required to listen for God's call for the congregation. Prayer is like going to the gym for our souls: While we may sense God's direction during our time of prayer, it is just as (or more) likely that the answers to the questions we are posing will come while we are not in prayer.

Overarching questions First United Church is asking:

- God – how are you calling us to deepen our relationship with you – and with one another?
- What are you calling us to release and/or embrace?
- How are you calling us as a church? To what actions are you calling us? What is our witness in this community?

Week 2 – Prayer of Acceptance

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38

A kernel of wisdom from the world of personal transformation is this: "The feelings we resist, we entrench." When we resist our feelings of pain, sorrow or anxiety, we tend to make them stronger. It is when we accept our feelings exactly as they are that they lose their power over us and we can chart a different or more confident way forward. (This is good advice also in this time of COVID-19). Similarly, when we deny our congregation's current reality or regard our current reality with judgement, it can cause us either to long for the "good old days" or to seek someone to blame for our situation. Consider the following saying: "We change because God loves us, not in order to win God's love." Said somewhat differently: "The church will change because we love it, not to win our love." During this week, focus on accepting and loving the congregation – in all of its manifestations – exactly as it is right now.

This week try to spend anywhere from 2 – 20 minutes per day in intentional silence, as we have outlined in the prayer overview. Outside of this time, consider the following questions:

1. What are you being invited to accept about First United that might be hard for you to do?
2. What shifts within you as you practice accepting First United as it is?
3. As you reflect on the overarching First United questions above, and the "What we think we know" document, what do you hear God saying?

For a prayer app, please see: <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-mobile-app>



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