

I would like to remind you all that next Sunday Aban Zirikly will be leading the music in our service. Aban was here two weeks ago singing with the choir and playing the postlude. He has applied to be our Music Director. If you can, I hope you will attend and give your feedback to the members of the Music Committee. (Viola Glendinning, Betsy Graves, Judy Falconer, Linda Brunner or me)

Thank you to Judy for interrupting her retirement to help us by providing beautiful music for our services and for being of great assistance in our search.

Gerri Kelsey's service will be Sunday, October 9 at 2:00. I know that is a busy weekend! If you remember something particular that Gerri enjoyed, please help the Hospitality Committee out with food, set up, clean up etc.

Also that weekend is the MidCoast Association Conference. October 8 9AM-3PM Congregational Church of Boothbay Harbor. Paul Nickerson who teaches and coaches congregations all over the country on how to reach new people, make a difference in lives and transform communities will lead a workshop for clergy and laity to learn how to connect with the community and gather new people.

HEBREW BIBLE Jeremiah 8:18-9:1
EPISTLE 1 Timothy 2:1-7
GOSPEL Luke 16:1-13
MESSAGE Pray without ceasing... Pastor Beth Hood

LIGHT THE MEMORIAL CANDLE The message this week has nearly written itself.

We light the Memorial Candle to the honor and memory of my friend, Gerri Kelsey. As we do so, we pray for her family and friends who will surely miss her.

I am prone to think of prayer as having to sit, or kneel, fold my hands and consciously give myself over to speaking to God. And so, I miss many opportunities. But this past week has been a constant prayer.

Anne of Green Gables said, "Why must people kneel down to pray? If I really wanted to pray I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd go out into a great big field all alone or in the deep, deep woods and I'd look up into the sky—up—up—up into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I'd just feel a prayer."

On my drive home last night, it seemed as if this week had come full circle. The power of last Sunday was still with me as I heard the news of bombings in New York. And I felt like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "And in despair I bowed my head; "There is no peace on earth," I said. I began the week with a stop to see Gerri on my way out of town. I was able to give her my love and a promise that she would be my first stop on the way home to show her pictures of our twins.

I began the trip in hope and joy. The babies had been born the day before and were doing well. They were tiny, but they spent their first day with their parents, other grandparents and sister in their mother's room. All was well and they were beautiful.

It was a gorgeous day and I began the trip as a prayer of thanksgiving, As Anne said, 'under a sky so blue that it seemed there was no end to its blueness.'

I stopped to see my parents on the way down, and things were a little more concerning. I continued my trip praying that my father would feel better. But looking forward to the joy at the end of the road.

And every once in awhile shooting a glance heavenward thanking God that I noticed that car stopping suddenly in front of me, or corrected my path.

When I got to the hospital, one of our tiny angels had been taken to the Neo Natal Intensive Care Unit with a very high red blood count. And as I arrived the second tiny girl was taken to the Continuing Care Unit because she was so tiny she couldn't keep her temperature up.

I went to NICU with our son, Nolan, and held Brielle and thought, I should say a prayer. But Nolan and I were talking, I was gazing at our tiny girl willing her blood count to come down. And pausing over the other babies in the Unit, the babies who in his own distress, our son could say, "Mom, we are so lucky. There are babies in here much sicker than ours." And as we left I realized I was worn from praying, every fiber of my being had been praying for our baby and the others.

As I drove from the hospital to their house to take up my duties with their two year old sister, I prayed for the daughter-in-law I had just left with tears welling in her eyes as she looked around the room that had held so much joy and was now so empty. I prayed for our son and for his little girls.

The next day as Abigail and I walked out into a beautiful day. I was thankful for such a day and the joy that I felt in her presence. Yes, I felt a prayer.

And the following day when I got a call from Linda Kelsey, my heart broke. And I cried, sad that I had not made it home in time to show her pictures, sad that my visits with her were over. That we would not have those feisty, fun afternoons.

I could feel her presence and it occurred to me when Linda told me the time that Gerri had moved from life to life, that that was the same time the nurses in the NICU had asked Nolan if he could help them move Brielle out of the NICU and into the CCU where she would be with her sister, Cameron. And I prayed, prayed for loss, prayed for peace for Gerri and prayed for continued healing for our granddaughters.

There was prayer in the sunshine, there was prayer in the faces of people whose expressions softened and brightened as Abigail passed by them oblivious to the joy in her wake, there was prayer in thanks for the time I had to spend with Gerri, there was prayer in thanksgiving that she was no longer in pain and there was prayer for her family who I know will miss her.

My visit ended in joy and thanksgiving that I was able to hold my granddaughters before leaving and help that whole dear, little family begin their journey home.

There was prayer in the most magnificent moon that seemed to stay ahead of me most of the way home. And there was prayer as I listened to the sobering reports from New York.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul commands us to pray without ceasing. Obviously, he does not mean that we should be in a posture of prayer, head bowed, eyes closed all day long. Paul is not talking about non stop talking, but rather an attitude of God-consciousness and God-surrender that we carry with us all the time. Every waking moment is to be lived in an awareness that God is with us and that He is actively involved and engaged in our thoughts and actions.

When our thoughts turn to worry, fear, discouragement, and anger, we are to consciously and quickly turn every thought into prayer and every prayer into thanksgiving.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul commands us to stop being anxious and instead, 'in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'

For Christians, prayer should be like breathing. You do not have to think to breathe because the atmosphere exerts pressure on your lungs and essentially forces you to breathe. That is why it is more difficult to hold your breath than it is to breathe. Similarly, when we are born into the family of God, we enter into a spiritual atmosphere where God's presence and grace exert pressure, or influence, on our lives. Prayer is the normal response to that pressure.

The writer of 1 Timothy this morning prays for and urges others to pray for the leaders of nations, that they might live in peace and seek God's wisdom. In "The Message", this morning's reading begins, "The first thing I want you to do is pray."

Pray first, last, and at all times, and pray not just for yourself and your own, but for all of God's children. If we pray in all things and in all times, perhaps it won't be so hard to get along with one another, and with our rulers and kings, as we make our way toward the truth.

In "The Brothers Karamazov", Fyodor Dostoyevsky says, "Be not forgetful of prayer. Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education."

And Soren Kierkegaard, "Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays." Would that we would all be changed, and in that, our world.