

May Devotional – Celebrating the Women of our Faith

This month, as we celebrate Mother's Day, our devotionals focus on four women of the faith: Sarah, Esther, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene. The weekly prayers are all written by Christian women from across the ages. You are invited to learn about some of the opportunities for service and study for women in our own congregation.

May 1 – 8

Woman of the Bible: Sarah



Sarah, also spelled Sarai, was the wife of Abraham and the mother Isaac. The story of Sarah is found in the book of Genesis. Sarah was childless until she was 90 years old. God promised Abraham that she would be “a mother of nations” and that she would conceive and bear a son. Sarah's story is one of faith and of doubt; it is a story about waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled.

Read: Genesis 11:31- 21:7

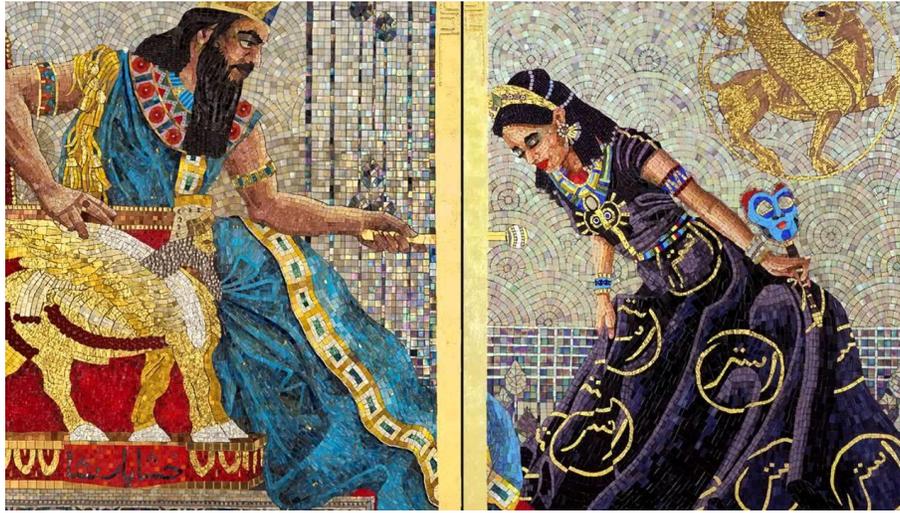
Prayer: “God, how can we forgive when bonds of love are torn? How can we rise and start anew, our trust reborn? When human loving fails and every hope is gone, your love give strength beyond our own to face the dawn. When we have missed the mark, and tears of anguish flow, how can you still release our guilt, the debt we owe? The ocean depth of grace surpasses all our needs. A priest who shares our human pain, Christ intercedes. Who dares to throw the stone to damn another's sin, when you, while knowing all our past, forgive again? No more we play the judge, for by your grace we live. As you, O God, forgive our sin, may we forgive.” Words by Ruth Duck © 1996 The Pilgrim Press. (Ruth Duck is a United Church of Christ minister. She has published many books about worship and has written many contemporary hymns.)

The Women's Missionary Society:

The W.M.S. is an organization within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It was formed in 1914 by women in the denomination who were passionate about mission and about encouraging congregations to reach out to their communities and world with the love and compassion of Christ. In pre-Covid times, the WMS at Knox has met to study and promote mission within our congregation. Mission Awareness Sundays have focused on various projects including, among other things: Winnipeg Innerscity Mission, the Action Refugee Centre in Montreal, Sleeping Children around the World and wells for those in developing countries.

May 9-16

Woman of the Bible: Esther



Esther is the Jewish queen of a Persian king during the time of the Exile. Esther's story invites us to think about times when we find ourselves in a difficult position, when we have been called to make tough decisions. It reminds us that that privilege also comes with responsibility.

Scriptures: The Book of Esther (10 chapters in length)

Prayer "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass. God does not change. Patience achieves everything. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices. Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people." (Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila, 1515-1582)

Outreach Circle: Years ago, the women at the church were all organized into "circles". These small groups provided opportunities for fellowship and service. As the years passed, and more and more women returned to the workforce, many of the circles were no longer able to meet. The Country Circle, however, continued. Eventually, women from the city also joined. Because many worked outside the home, the group was re-named "Evening Circle". Six or seven years ago, the group moved to afternoon meetings, as most of the group were retired. Before the "pause" of Covid 19, Outreach Circle met monthly. Their meetings included a devotional, and a light luncheon. They organized the Garage Sale and the Rummage Sale, contributed to and helped at the church Bazaar, and organized funeral luncheons. Their goal was to have an outreach focus, and so once a year they held a tea for those in retirement and nursing homes; they contributed funds and food regularly to the FoodBank and support other community projects. At Christmas, this group bakes cookies and purchases gifts for those who have had a difficult year, or for those in need.

May 17-24

Woman of the Bible: Mary



Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a young woman who was called by God to bring His Son into the world. Perhaps the most surprising part of Mary's story, is that she said yes! Yes, when she was afraid. Yes, when it meant her own life would be changed forever. Mary is featured in only a few scripture readings. She was present at Jesus' birth, and at his death. It is believed that she went on to have

more children following Jesus' birth.

Scriptures:

Luke 1:26-38

Luke 1:39-56

Luke 2:1-20

Luke 2:21-40

Luke 2:41-51

John 2:1-12

John 19:25-27

Prayer: "Be near Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of yours. Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.

Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be light to others. The light, O Jesus, will be all from you. None of it will be ours. It will be you shining on others through us.

Let us thus praise you in the way you love best by shining on those around us.

Let us preach you without preaching, not by words, but by our example; by the catching force – the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you. Amen." Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Interest Groups: Our Church is blessed with many smaller groups within the church that meet on a regular basis (when we're not living through a worldwide pandemic). All of these groups contribute to the Church Bazaar, and serve as a "home base" for women in the church. Men are not excluded from any of these groups – but it seems like those who are attracted to them are women! These groups are formed around interests: the Knitters, Sew it Seams, Moms Group, Crafters, Cannin' and Jammin', and the Kitchen Whiches.

May 24- 30

Woman of the Bible: Mary Magdalene

Mary of Magdala (or Mary Magdalene) was one of Jesus' disciples. According to Scripture, she had been healed by Jesus, and then became a close friend and follower. She witnessed the crucifixion, and was the first person to whom the risen Christ appeared.



Scriptures:

Luke 7:36-50

Luke 8:1-3

John 19:23-27

Luke 23:55-56

John 20:1-20

Acts 1:12-14

Prayer: “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 like it has no end to its blueness. And then I’d just feel a prayer.” (Lucy Maud Montgomery, in “Anne of Green Gables.”)

Presbyterian Women: This is the umbrella organization for all of the women’s groups and activities in the church. In early 2020, they re-organized their structure to more closely connect to this purpose. Presbyterian Women is instrumental in organizing the Church Bazaar; they ensure our church kitchen has up to date equipment; they provide funds for coffee and kitchen supplies – thus lightening the load on the church’s finances.