

Let us Pray

By Joan Stewart, Leadership Team Chair

Years ago when I was an intern at Kopperston Presbyterian Church, I had the privilege of being taught how to be a pastor by many of the women of the church. The most unforgettable lesson I learned about prayer came from Florence Mae. Florence Mae and I were in the grocery store when a woman came up to her, and in tears she said, "Florence Mae, will you pray for me?" Florence Mae did not say "Of course I will," she immediately took the woman's hand and said, "Let us pray." Right there in the canned goods Florence Mae prayed for God's blessing on her life, and to bring healing to her pain. I was awed. I didn't learn to pray in seminary—I learned to pray from a woman who believed in the power of prayer and was not afraid to say "Let us pray."

In her book *Sailboat Church* Joan Gray writes, "In spite of speaking about God quite a bit, studying a book that claims to be God's word, and doing activities we believe God wants us to do, the actual experience of the personal presence of God is not much sought or expected in the church or in the lives of its members." In other words, we talk a lot ABOUT God. We talk a lot ABOUT prayer. Yet how often do we say, "Let us pray?"

The Leadership Team Retreat to kick off 2015 focused on prayer. For all of you who have wondered just what the Presbytery has done for you lately, I want you to know that for one thing you have been prayed for. We prayed for the staff, for every committee, and its members. We prayed for every church and chapel, for every agency, for every Teaching Elder, CRE, Educator and more. Your name has been said out loud in prayer. It is not like God isn't big enough to know about whom we praying. Have you ever heard the saying that prayer doesn't change God—prayer changes us? We found that to be true as we made prayer connections with those we knew, wondered about those we don't know, and committed to continue to lift one another in prayer for God's will for us.

"Let Us Pray" is our challenge for 2015, and a challenge we pass on to the Presbytery of WV. To call it our "theme" sounds trite. To say we are going to make prayer our focus may cause many of you to think "DUH!" We want to stop, to listen, to seek God's will in Word, in Community, and in the sheer silence. We want to lay down our oars, stop rowing madly toward some vague goal, and let the Wind of the Spirit fill our sails instead. As we pray for God's direction in our Presbytery, please join us. Let us pray...

Quote taken from Gray, Joan S. (2014-03-12). *Sailboat Church: Helping Your Church Rethink Its Mission and Practice*. Westminster John Knox Press.