

A Message from Asbury's Pastors on Prayer Requests:

Recently we have been asked about our church's practices regarding sharing of prayer needs/requests and other information as a way of supporting our church members. Prayer is an important part of our spiritual journey. And there are several ways in which Asbury supports you in prayer. If you are worshiping onsite, you may fill out a prayer request card located on the tables in the back of the sanctuary, and drop it into the offering plate on your way out of the service. If you are worshiping online, you can submit a prayer request at asburylv.org/prayercard or via email at prayer@asburylv.org. These prayer requests are shared with our volunteer prayer ministry team and the pastors (unless you indicate it is only for the pastors). The pastors and prayer ministry team pray for all of these individuals through the week. The prayer requests are also lifted up by the online prayer group that meets on Tuesdays at 9:00. In addition to this, Asbury has prayer ministers following each service that are available to pray with you in person after worship.

As a large church, your first line of prayer and support should come from your small group. A large church like Asbury is not meant to be Cheers - where everyone knows your name, but someone should know your name. Belonging to a small group gives you the opportunity, if desired, to share your requests with each other and lift each other up in prayer. At the same time, we need to respect the privacy of those who may have needs they don't want shared with a larger group.

As Ordained Pastors in the United Methodist Church, we take an oath of confidentiality with regards to any and all conversations with parishioners. Pastors

cannot respond to your verbal or email requests to know about someone's illness or if they are in the hospital, unless we have express consent from that person. While some individuals may not mind having their information shared, we've had people tell us they didn't want anyone to know they were hospitalized or sick, so respecting privacy is imperative. While the church is not technically under HIPPA laws governing medical facilities, we have an ethical and moral obligation to not share medical information. Regarding members' deaths and funerals, however, we can and do share this information, with family permission, in worship and weekly e-news.

Some of you have asked why we don't read prayer requests in worship and there are several reasons we do not. First, we may not always know for sure that we have a person's permission to share the information. Second, we may have incorrect or incomplete information. In the past, Asbury has announced that someone had cancer that did not, and we have shared information about someone struggling with mental health issues who did not want that shared. Third, we will not share information in an online setting regarding minors when there could be issues with an estranged parent or relative. Just because we don't read prayer requests in worship doesn't mean we do not take prayer seriously. There are many places to uplift your prayer requests (prayer ministry team, pastors, small groups, online prayer group).

Some of you have asked for a directory of names and addresses so that you can send cards and notes to people in need. In keeping with our commitment to environmental justice by reducing printed materials, we are currently looking at a digital directory where people can be given instructions to "opt in" to provide their name and

contact info, with the understanding this can be shared with others. We'll keep you updated as we move forward.

Blessings,

Pastor Eric and Pastor Evelyn