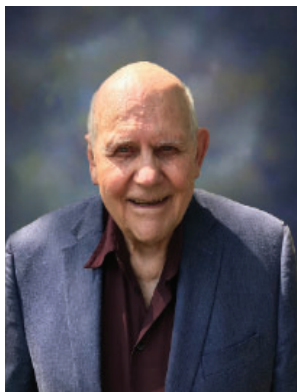

Prayers Of the People

The Reverend Dr. Lawrence W. Johnson Award Lay Minister of the Year 2018

AUTHUR GENE MEYER



My path in Chaplaincy began in October, 2012 when the invitation to POP's Lay Chaplaincy Training Program was presented to me. It was God's perfect timing. Previously, I had the great privilege of mentoring "at risk" children at Wells Middle School and journeying with those incarcerated at Eastham Prison. Now, it is a blessing to listen to the anxieties shared by hospital patients and journey with them seeking God's love and remembering his promises. The patients I visit are in the Medical/Surgical Section, a wonderful racially diverse patient population and range from having no established religious belief to ordained clergy and there are occasional Muslims. Occasionally there are those visits to help people through the process of stopping life support systems or comforting family and staff who experience a patient's death.

POP Chaplaincy has many similarities with a Lay Pastor program at Northwoods Presbyterian Church developed by Rev. Jane MacColl and maintained by Rev. Ann Marie Quigley-Swanson. As part of this program for twelve years, it is a joy to support the visitation demands on the church staff.

Originally from Casper, Wyoming, I earned a degree in chemical engineering at the University of Colorado. I married Connie Atwood, my high school sweetheart and in December, 2017, we celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary. Our children are Mark, Eric and Karen. We have four grandchildren and one great-grandson. Early in my career, I joined Shell and finished my career with them. Our home was California for many years including three years in The Hague Netherlands. We moved to Houston in 1972 and joined a Northwoods Presbyterian, a church plant of First Presbyterian – Houston.

Life changed dramatically for me in July of 1971 while living in Holland. A great joy came over me for a week and as that started to go away it was replaced with an understanding of God's unhappiness about the violence in Northern Ireland. In response, I wrote letters challenging the major church denominations in Belfast about providing any sense of support for those causing the violence. Correspondence followed to share ideas for promoting peace with leaders of the Anglican and Presbyterian Denominations. Anglican participation ended and most letters were with Rev. A. J. Weir who five years later became Moderator for the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. That coincided with founding of the Community of Peace People and the two women who received the Nobel Peace prize for their peace efforts. I believe this was the beginning of God's grace for Northern Ireland. More of this and copies of some correspondence is included in my book, Restoring Peace to Troubled Communities.

In early 1973 when all avenues to move to Belfast seemed blocked and murders remained near 500 a year, I felt distressed and alienated from God. Grace for me began early one morning in Boston when a man stepped out of the shadows and asked me for money. I told him "I don't give money but I buy breakfasts" and we found a nearby restaurant. Just released after serving eight years in San Quentin Prison, he had no hope. When I started to speak, the words were not mine but God's words of hope, "There are many wonderful things in this life and it is worth all of the effort you can give to find them." We talked about where real help can be found and he was helped financially. A weekly jail visitation program became open for me and provided a way to work toward the feeling of being a faithful follower of Jesus. I served eighteen years and three as president for New Directions which provides assistance for those transitioning from prison life. Presbytery of New Covenant provided many opportunities to serve, including Moderator in 2003. Prayers Of the People Lay Chaplaincy is God's gift now. Houston Northwest Medical Center is close to my home and a fine healthcare facility that celebrates offering spiritual care to their patients. AnneMarie has been a good friend and very supportive. She provided knowledge and leadership in discussions with Houston Northwest Medical Center and Lay Chaplains there. We praise God for grace and wisdom.

"Chaplain Gene Meyer is a model of faith in action! His life journey of surrendering to God is absolutely inspirational. Thank you, eternally, Gene!" AnneMarie Wallace, POP Staff & Board of Directors