

GOD'S VISION FOR OUR CHURCH



Prayer - Discernment - Discussion

Hudson Valley Parish invites you:
November 11 through December 29

40+ days of daily prayer for ourselves and our churches
 ???

Be open to discern God's desire and vision for our Church
 ????

Is your church sustainable? For how much longer?
 ???

Weekly Laity discussions exploring the hard reality we are all facing:
 What is CHURCH to you?

Are you willing to change how you do church, to worship in a different location, to travel a little more to help a vital ministry?
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What ministries would you be passionate about with enough people and resources to make it happen?
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How would it serve the Kin-dom of God if we were to merge the churches in our Parish?
 ????

For more info and ZOOM link email: hudsonvalleyparish23@gmail.com

GOD'S VISION FOR OUR CHURCH

40+ Days of Prayer, Discernment, & Discussion
Hudson Valley Cooperative Parish
November 11 through December 29, 2024

What is God's desire and vision for YOUR church, the churches within our Hudson Valley Cooperative Parish? Each one of our churches is struggling with financial sustainability, losing key members as they move or pass away, not able to bring in new members, lamenting the small numbers of children and young adults, burning out from trying to meet the critical needs of our communities with too few people to do too much work.

And, yet, we KNOW this is not who or where God wants our church community to be. Our hearts are aching to reach out from that deepest connection of LOVE to serve one another and those in our world in vital and important ways. Our souls are hungering for time and space to be immersed in meaningful worship and deep spiritual grounding and fulfillment. God wants us to THRIVE, not struggle to simply survive!

Last spring, our Parish Council was presented with information and data on the Church and its decline. We recognized that we needed to have some hard conversations about the reality of our

individual congregations, our financial resources, our worship attendance, and our volunteers' ability/time/energy to support our missions and ministries. Some churches may be faced with the immediate decision of closing or merging, and others see those decisions looming on the very near horizon. Pastor Grace offered one vision of how we might meld our churches together to combine our Sunday morning worship experience, identify and address critical community needs with ministry hubs, and pool our resources to become one larger church community instead of many small struggling congregations. We need to consider and explore this and other ideas of how we can become a vibrant, thriving church presence to all of our communities.

We hope you have started having conversations within your Administrative Council and with your church members. That you are asking difficult questions and taking an honest look at the reality of where you are, and given current trajectories, where that is taking you if changes are not made quickly. This is REALLY HARD WORK. It requires soul searching of what church means to you, why you are a part of the community you are in, and whether you are willing to do the work needed to help move our Church to where God is leading us.

Here is an opportunity to enter into these discussions with ALL of the laity across our Parish. As a Church, it is foundational that we ground ourselves in our faith and surround ourselves with prayer and discernment for what God wants of us, to set aside our own desires, concerns, and egos, and to open ourselves to allow the Spirit to work within us and through us. We are asking you to take some time each day to immerse yourself in prayer for your local church, for each church in this Parish, and for wisdom, discernment, and guidance for how we can come together and be a stronger, more effective witness to God's love.

We will gather together once a week via Zoom to discuss the tough issues we are facing, to pull apart those difficult questions, to share what may have surfaced during your prayer time, and to work together to explore how we may step forward. This is a laity driven effort and we need your input. We know everyone's schedules are busy, especially since we are doing this through the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, and that you will not be able to make each

discussion. We are meeting on a different day each week so that hopefully you will be able to attend at least some of the sessions:

Sunday, November 17, 4-5:30pm
Monday, November 25, 7-8:30pm
Tuesday, December 3, 7-8:30pm
Wednesday, December 11, 7-8:30pm
Thursday, December 19, 7-8:30pm
Friday, December 27, 7-8:30pm

I'mWe will then conclude this phase of our prayer, discernment, and discussion work by holding a Wesley Covenant Service:

Common Worship Service, Sunday December 29, 10am (place to be decided)
where all churches willing to give up their own Sunday morning worship service on this 5th Sunday can join in one sanctuary for us all to worship together as we enter into the new year.

We have also created a Google Chat message board for you to post your thoughts and ideas between meetings, encourage each other in prayer, and stay in community through this process:

GOOGLE CHAT SPACE "Parish Discernment" LINK: <https://chat.google.com/room/AAAnTFG7GE?cls=7>

If you are not able to access this chat space, email hudsonvalleyparish23@gmail.com to be added to the online conversation.

Suggestions for daily prayer focus:

Week 1 - "Jesus said, 'Love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul, mind and strength'" (Mark 12:20)

A week of personal prayers, preparing ourselves individually to come together in community for discussion and discernment

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| 11/11, Monday | God, please increase my love and devotion for You.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/12, Tuesday | God, please increase my faith to trust You more.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/13, Wednesday | God, please help me become more discerning to Your nudges.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/14, Thursday | God, please give me a greater hunger for prayer.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/15, Friday | God, please give me a greater hunger for the Scriptures.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/16, Saturday | God, please help me engage more deeply in worshiping You... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |

11/17, 4pm, Zoom **Sunday discussion**

Week 2 - Pray for God's Discernment

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|-------------------------|--|
| 11/18, Monday | Pray for our hearts to be open to your will and desire for our Church as we journey together <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/19, Tuesday | Pray for God to guide our vision and direction <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/20, Wednesday | Pray for God to open our eyes to see the vision. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/21, Thursday | Pray for God to guide each step and decision the church makes. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/22, Friday | Pray for clarity of purpose and focus. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/23, Saturday | Pray for spiritual transformation in our lives and in our Church. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/24 | Regular worship, Christ the King Sunday |
| 11/25, 7pm, Zoom | Monday discussion |

Week 3 - "Jesus said, "Love others as yourself" Matthew 12:31

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| 11/26, Tuesday | Pray for our love and compassion for others to increase.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/27, Wednesday | Pray our love will grow for those we ignore and forget. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/28, THANKSGIVING DAY | Pray our love for one another will grow and deepen. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/29, Friday | Pray to help us foster more meaningful relationships with others.... <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 11/30, Saturday | Pray our love for our enemies will grow. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/1 | 1 st Sunday in Advent - HOPE |
| 12/2, Monday | Pray our love for those who we find most difficult to love will grow. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/3, 7pm, Zoom | Tuesday discussion |

Week 4 - Prayers for God to empower and equip us

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| 12/4, Wednesday | Pray for God to help us identify our gifts and use them for the kin-dom. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/5, Thursday | Pray for God to help us envision how we can empower our ministries. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |

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| 12/6, Friday | Pray that God will motivate and energize us to embrace new opportunities. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/7, Saturday | Pray that God would empower each of us to lead into the future. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/8 | 2nd Sunday in Advent - PEACE |
| 12/9, Monday | Pray that God would humble us and remove our pride so that we may become the Church God desires us to be. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/10, Tuesday | Pray for us to follow God's lead rather than human "wisdom." <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |

12/11, 7pm, Zoom **Wednesday discussion**

Week 5 - Prayers for Courage (Acts 4:23-31)

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| 12/12, Thursday | Pray for God to give us courage to become the light of Christ to our communities <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/13, Friday | Pray for us to live boldly to create God's vision for our Church <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/14, Saturday | Pray for God to help us move forward beyond our hesitancy and timidity. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/15 | 3 rd Sunday in Advent - JOY |
| 12/16, Monday | Pray for us to have the freedom to live God's vision. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/17, Tuesday | Pray for how we might work together to clearly and boldly share God's vision. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/18, Wednesday | Pray that we might be a community that fully reveals God's kin-dom on earth. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |

12/19, 7pm, Zoom **Thursday discussion**

**Week 6 - "Jesus said, "I will build My Church upon the Rock of Christ and the gates of hell will not defeat it."
(Matthew 16:18)**

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|-----------------|---|
| 12/20, Friday | Lord, please pour out Your Spirit in fresh, new ways upon us. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/21, Saturday | Lord, please increase our desire and ambition to grow as Your Church. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |
| 12/22 | 4 th Sunday in Advent - LOVE |
| 12/23, Monday | Lord, please help us better engage with others seeking your love and grace. <i>What is God speaking to your heart?</i> |

12/24, CHRISTMAS EVE

Lord, please help us to envision a new birth for your church in our communities.

What is God speaking to your heart?

12/25, CHRISTMAS DAY

Lord, let us celebrate Your Presence in our lives today.

What is God speaking to your heart?

12/26, Thursday

Lord, please increase our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness.

What is God speaking to your heart?

12/27, 7pm, Zoom

Friday discussion

12/28, Saturday

Lord, "May Your Kingdom come and Your will be done on Earth as in Heaven..."

What is God speaking to your heart?

12/29, 10am, In person & Zoom

Common Worship Service, 10am

Wesley Covenant Service

(place to be decided)

Coffee before, fellowship & conversation following

If you pray by singing, we suggest:

"Lord, Listen to your Children Praying" FWS 2193

Lord, listen to your children praying

Lord, send your Spirit in this place

Lord, listen to your children praying

Send us love, send us power, send us grace

And, as always, remember Wesley's 3 simple rules:

Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.

GRACIOUS GOD, THANK YOU FOR HEARING OUR PRAYERS.

GOD IS SO GOOD!