

Article for 32963 ~ 10-1--09
By Rev. Drs. Casey and Bob Baggott
Community Church of Vero Beach

Keep Praying!

Do you pray? As ministers, the subject of prayer has professional as well as personal significance to us. So we've been closely following the resurgence of societal interest in spirituality and prayer. Have you noticed the number of articles and books on prayer which have been published lately? Bookstores devote entire sections and shelf after shelf to "spirituality." Among the titles, many are related to prayer. Books on the religious life top the bestseller lists. Popular magazines, too, are full of writings on spirituality. Awhile back someone gave us an issue of a magazine because it contained a fascinating article on prayer. The article was entitled, "The Healing Power of Prayer," (from which we will cite some figures below.)

The medical press is taking note of spirituality and prayer, as well. *The Journal of the American Medical Association* has published studies suggesting that religious observance and prayer have significant positive impact on health. Interestingly, as recently as a few years ago, scientific research on the prayer-health connection was fairly rare. But records now show that the federal government has funded numerous medical studies on the therapeutic value of religion. Psychologists, physicians, sociologists, and theologians are all studying the impact of our religious lives on our health and well-being. It's exciting to see fields of thought once considered incompatible, or at least unrelated, are now coming to more fully appreciate one another.

Do you pray? If you do, you are probably among the 96 percent of Americans who say they believe in God and the 80 percent who claim to pray regularly. (These figures are the highest among the western nations.) We are clearly a society that values spiritual life. Perhaps it's not so surprising then, that recent scientific research has sought to better understand the connections that many of us pray-ers have simply taken for granted.

Do you pray? We find that the people who say they don't pray claim they just don't know how to do it. But really, it's as natural as breathing and as easy as a conversation with a friend. Highly polished, beautiful rhetoric is wonderful in prayers, but unnecessary. Don't let a lack of poetic genius serve as a deterrent to prayer. Pray as you can, and do not worry about your perceived deficiencies. In time you'll discover that with practice, comfort and confidence increase – and eloquence will no longer be a concern.

There are many, many types of prayer. We can pray prayers of gratitude, petition, intercession, and praise. We can pray with long speeches, or wordlessly. We can pray out the content of our hearts, or wait in silence for God to fill our emptiness. However and whenever we do it, it appears to be good for us.

We are indeed, "fearfully and wonderfully made," as the incredible interactivity between our bodies, minds, and spirits demonstrates. St. Paul's advice to us to "pray without ceasing," if we take it, is likely to affect our lives broadly and deeply.

Do you pray? We hope so!