

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS
All Saints/ Memorial/ Communion –November 1, 2015 –Ephesians 1: 1-10
The Church of the Covenant

Sometimes the candles are not lit by the ushers on the communion table. The candles represent the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven before the Mercy Seat of Almighty God (Revelation 8:3). So it is not necessarily a good sign when that happens. But while from time to time we may forget to light these candles, the actual prayers of the saints, those in heaven and those on earth, continuously rise to heaven, without ceasing, and for all eternity. It is the PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS...

Our scripture from Ephesians is addressed to *“the saints who are also faithful...” (Ephesians 1: 1)* We are “the saints”; we are the children of the powerful, loving God. Saints are those who are, in the Greek, *“hagios”*, the “holy ones”, the set apart ones, the ones unlike the world and the culture around them. The great Byzantine church in Constantinople, *The Hagia Sophia*, means “The Holy Wisdom” in the Greek. The saints are made HOLY and we are set apart from the world when Jesus Christ comes and indwells us through the Holy Spirit. We are not particularly special; we are just forgiven, freed and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Every person, in heaven and on earth, every person, across the face of this globe, every person, regardless of circumstance, every person, who has ever lived and will ever live, every person, in whom the Holy, Holy, Holy God dwells through Jesus Christ is a saint. Not just some, but all. As Ephesians goes on to note: (the saints) are *“blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1: 3)* We, as the saints, have been chosen *“holy and blameless before him” (v. 4)* We were predestined before the foundation of the earth to be chosen and precious and stand in the presence of a Holy God. And this is the great plan of God from before the beginning, the very reason why God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into our world in the first place. The plan *“for the fullness of time”* is to *“unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (v. 10)* The saints on earth are united with the saints in heaven. The saints in heaven are united with the saints on earth. It is God’s plan, from before the very beginning of all things, to unite all things in His Son, Jesus Christ.

My wonderful church secretary at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Pittsburgh was quite a “prayer warrior”. She was a devoted person of prayer. She came by this honestly because her Mother was also devoted to intercessory prayer. She told me her Mother had extensive lists of people for whom she prayed every day; name after name, person after person, so many that, as I was told, she wasn’t entirely sure all of them were still alive, but she still kept praying for them. I was blessed to have been added to her prayer list. It is always a great comfort to me and a source of strength to consider how many people have prayed for me over all the years. And then a few years back my secretary’s Mother passed away. I remember thinking to myself how I was sad, not only for her loss, but that she would not be praying for me and others any more. It is funny how grief tells us that life does not go on. But that Jesus tells us we live forever. But then I discovered that the secretary had found her Mother’s extensive prayer list, the paper as thin as fine vellum from all the years of her holding those people in her hands. And then my secretary told me that she had picked up where her Mother had left off, and that

she was now praying for all the people on her Mother's prayer list. **The prayers of the saints go on forever**, I thought to myself. And then I continued in that train of thought. Why would death stop the saints from praying for us? Why would people stop praying when they came to heaven? Why would people who so loved to pray for others cease to do so in eternity? And I realized that some of the very reason why saints on earth and saints in heaven are connected is the prayers we pray for one another here on earth. The prayers of the saints, in heaven and on earth, rise before the Mercy Seat, the Great White throne where God dwells. These intercessions are placed upon the altar of incense of our God. It is just the saints in heaven sit in much closer proximity to God's throne now. My dear secretary's Mother continues her ministry of intercessory prayer, now in the very shadow of the Mercy Seat, in the Holy of Holies, in the radiant presence of Almighty God, and forever.

As we come to this time of communion on this All Saints Sunday, as we seek to enter into God's Holy Presence through the "*redemption in HIS (Jesus') blood*", we realize we are not alone. But we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, a great and mighty communion of the saints, who are with us now, who are with us especially in and through this sacrament, and who continue to pray for us, until we shall meet them again in heaven.

It is comforting to me to think of my secretary's Mother still praying for me, only now in heaven. It is comforting to me to think of my own dear Grandmother, my Mimi, who prayed for me every day of my life, and now thinking of her still praying for me in heaven. It is comforting to me to think of those gone on before us, like my dear friend, Randy Boyer, still present, still beside me, and still praying for me. It is comforting to me to think of all of the communion of the saints, a mighty cloud of witnesses too numerous to number, surrounding me, day and night, with unceasing prayers. It is comforting to me to think that the burning coals on the altar of incense in heaven never go out, the candles in heaven never flicker nor fail, and that our prayers always rise into the presence of a Holy God, seated on the Mercy Seat, in heaven. It is comforting to me. I hope it is comforting to you, as well. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*