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Editor's note: the following letter on prayer was submitted by Charles MacDonald and reminds us that "the Church is wherever God's people are praying".

Open Yourself to God

To pray means to open your hands before God. It means slowly relaxing the tension that squeezes your hands together and accepting your existence with an increasing readiness, not as a possession to defend, but as a gift to receive. Above all, prayer is a way of life that allows you to find stillness in the midst of the world where you open your hands to God's promises and find hope for yourself, your neighbor, and your world. In prayer, you encounter God not only in the small voice and the soft breeze, but also in the midst of the turmoil of the world, in the distress and joy of your neighbor, and in the loneliness of your own heart.

Prayer leads you to see new paths and to hear new melodies in the air. Prayer is the breath of your life that gives you freedom to go and to stay where you wish, to find the many signs that point out the way to a new land. Praying is not simply some necessary compartment in the daily schedule of a Christian or a source of support in a time of need, nor is it restricted to Sunday mornings or mealtimes. Praying is living. It is eating and drinking, acting and resting, teaching and learning, playing and working. Praying pervades every aspect of our lives. It is the unceasing recognition that God is wherever we are, always inviting us to come closer and to celebrate the divine gift of being alive.

In the end, a life of prayer is a life with open hands—a life where we need not be ashamed of our weaknesses but realize that it is more perfect for us to be led by the Other than to try to hold everything in our own hands.

[Henri J. M. Nouwen](#)

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

