

Wes Conn: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Wes Conn: Welcome to morning prayers. We'll begin today's service with the response of reading from the Black Appleton Chapel, Psalter Book, Psalm selection number 82 found on page 41 please stand as you're able. God has taken his place in the divine council in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.

Congregation: How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

Wes Conn: Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right to the afflicted and the destitute.

Congregation: Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Wes Conn: They have neither knowledge nor understanding. They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Congregation: I say, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you..

Wes Conn: Nevertheless, you shall die like men and fall like any prince.

Congregation: Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations>

Wes Conn: You may take your seats.

Choir: (singing).

Leon Welch: Good morning everyone.

Congregation: Good morning.

Leon Welch: So nice to be here today. I'd like to begin with a scripture found in Psalms 86 verses one and two. Lord bend down to listen to my prayer. I'm in deep trouble. I'm broken and humbled and I desperately need your help. Guard my life, for I am your faithful friend. You're loyal servant for life. I turn to you in faith. My God, my hero come and rescue me.

Leon Welch: I like to ponder for a few moments. The topic, one to the third power does not equal three. As a teen growing up in the 70s it was not uncommon to hear this phrase uttered among my peers, me, myself, and I. The purpose of the, it usually was to imply that at that particular instant, the person speaking had no need for anyone else in the picture or situation because there were already three. Me, myself, and I. In those moments of youthful pride and independence, we had no interest in figuring out that one to the third power amounted to simply being alone. To be able to handle one's business was and still is an indicator of one's ability to survive, surmount odds, to make it, in essence

a measure of one's masculinity or maturity. And honestly, I see nothing wrong with that. So time passed and I matured a bit and I also learned some math.

Leon Welch: I left the singularly independent world of one to the third and began to doubt the idea of one plus one. That is to say, I have me and I have added another me. IE, my credentials, my status, my accomplishments, my acquisitions, my marriage, et cetera. These equaled the other me. I imagine how far I could go and the quality of life I could have. I even imagined having enough to give to charities and those in need and to be truthful, I was able to realize some of these dreams for a time.

Leon Welch: But one day with all my good intentions, my world crashed. A terrible car accident, rocked my world and claimed three members of my loved ones. From that point onwards, loss began to accumulate. I lost my home. Then I lost my business. I almost lost me. I was ashamed, embarrassed and afraid. I felt that God had forsaken me. After all, that would not have been the first time or the last time that someone felt abandoned by God. I felt as though I had been laid open bare eviscerated and left to be devoured by the vultures of life. I discovered in those moments that the other me in which I had developed some confidence could not help me. I needed more than me and myself. To whom could I go in my brokenness?

Leon Welch: People were already carrying their own burdens and certainly could not be expected to carry mine. Have you ever been in a tight spot where you were too afraid to move and at the same time petrified at the imagined outcome if you did move? There I was a man who had spent nary an idle moment in his life now lost, listless and broke. As a person raised in the Christian tradition. I've always appreciated the value of prayer and I'll admit that these times were not times that I wanted to pray.

Leon Welch: I was too bitter to pray for myself, but thankfully others had been praying for me. It was in this season of frustration with life that people were divinely appearing into my life to help me live again. I'm so thankful to the Lord that my family and I have been recipients of his abundant grace. The third parties who entered and exited our lives at the appropriate times were not chosen by us. I've seen the reflection of God in the faces of these people. I truly believe that there are angels all around us, messengers sent to aid us in times of trouble. Most of the times we are too taken with life to see them.

Leon Welch: But I believe if we took a moment to look over our shoulders left or right, we would discover the third variable in the formula. One plus one plus one equals three. It's easy to do. I've learned to give a smile and receive one back. I've learned that my neighbor is everyone outside of myself. I've learned that giving others a gift is a gift to myself.

Leon Welch: I have with me a tripod today tripod has three legs. As you can see, it doesn't work with one leg, it doesn't even work with two, but with three it can support and hold and that's the message I hope that can leave with you today. That in moments of vulnerability that if we look over to our right or left, you might see an angel. I'm just going to ask you to join me in a song, a very popular, probably well known song from the 70s written by Bill Withers it's just a short, the chorus part of it. It's called Lean On Me. Now I'm not a

singer, but if we do this together, I'd like you to take a moment and be risky and just lean on the shoulder of the person next to you as we sing this together.

Leon Welch: (Singing) "Lean of me, when you're not strong. And I'll be your friend. I'll help you carry on. For it won't be long 'till I'm gonna need somebody to lean on."

Leon Welch: God bless you.

Wes Conn: Would you please join me in praying together the Lord's prayer found on the reverse of your order of worship. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Please join me and singing the hymn for the Splendor of Creation. Number 351 in your Crimson Harvard Hymnal. Please stand as you are able.

Congregation: (singing).

Wes Conn: May the Lord keep you from evil. May the Lord keep you and you're going out and when you're coming in from this time on and forevermore. Amen.

Group: Amen.