

Monday 7/9 Morning

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

Let us pray. May it be Your will, O Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, guide our footsteps toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush along the way, and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May you grant us grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. Blessed are You, our Lord, who hears prayer. *Amen.* (**Jewish Wayfarer's Prayer**)

We are well along the way of the Heroine's journey. The heroine started out at home. Then she answered God's call to leave home and go on an adventure. And this is where the going can get tough. In all the great stories, this is the stage of the journey when the hardships come. Odysseus had to sail between Scylla and Charybdis: trying not to be crushed by deadly rocks on one side, and sucked into a deadly whirlpool on the other. In the Princess Bride, Princess Buttercup and her Westley had to make their way through the Fire Swamp. In CS Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*: Lucy, Susan, Peter and Edmund had to wage a great battle against the White Witch.

All along the way, when the path gets dark, the heroic travelers rely on their strength, their instincts, and sometimes a magic lamp. Our personal guidepost today on our own heroine's journey is a woman who faced many challenges and opposition, and prevailed in doing what was right, and accomplishing the task set before her: Frances Perkins.

Frances Perkins was born in 1880 in Boston. As a young adult she discovered the Episcopal Church and was confirmed at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, Illinois. She was a faithful and active Episcopalian for the remainder of her life.

Frances became a social activist early on. She once held a dangerous job investigating phony employment agencies that lured immigrant girls into prostitution. Working in New York City in 1911, Perkins happened to witness the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, in which 146 workers — mostly young Jewish and Italian women — died. Witnessing that tragedy transformed Perkins into a practical crusader who felt called to commit her life to making workplaces safer.

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Perkins as Secretary of the Department of Labor, a position she held for twelve years, longer than any other Secretary of Labor. She was the first woman to hold a cabinet position in the United States and thus, became the first woman to enter the presidential line of succession. As Secretary of Labor, Perkins wrote New Deal legislation, including minimum-wage laws. She helped create the Civilian Conservation Corps and drafted the Social Security Act of 1935. All of her enduring work was accomplishing while often being under fire at the office and in the news for her gender, all the while caring for her husband and daughter, both of whom suffered from bipolar disorder.

During her years of public service, Frances Perkins depended upon her faith, her life of prayer, and the guidance of her church for the support she needed to help lead our country during a dark time. A biographer said Frances Perkins was a great lady who rarely took off her hat in public but knew how to take her gloves off when it mattered for Americans. The Episcopal Church celebrates her life on May 13.

Let us pray.

Loving God, we bless your Name for Frances Perkins who in faithfulness to her baptism sought to build a society in which all may live in health and decency: Help us, following her example and in union with her prayers, to contend tirelessly for justice and for the protection of all, that we may be faithful followers of Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*