



Anglican Network in Canada

First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer – January 2013

"I love the LORD because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!"
Psalm 116:1-2 NLT

Welcome to our January 2013 first Friday Call to Prayer. Our aim is to provide you with teaching that we trust will enhance your prayer experience and will be an encouragement to you. We will also provide you with praise items and prayer requests coming from within ANiC and the Anglican Communion worldwide.

<p>We encourage you to set aside the first Friday, January 4th, as a day of prayer and fasting for the Church in these critical days, ideally gathering with other believers in your parish or region for corporate prayer at some point in the day.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Prayer Quotes</p> <p><i>"Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Andrew Murray 1828-1917</p>
--	---

A new year is a time of new beginnings, new resolve, and, for some of us at least, new diets and new disciplines. It may seem unfair to feature an article on fasting immediately after a time of feasting over the Christmas season, but I felt that the following article by Bishop John Guernsey was timely for us as we strive to stay vigilant in prayer for ANiC and not fall back into "business as usual". Fasting needs to be a part of our Christian life, and no better time to start than at the beginning of the new year.

Bishop John is one of the premier Bible teachers within ACNA and is especially gifted in teaching on prayer and related disciplines.

Garth V. Hunt+
prayer@anglicannetwork.ca

Eight Reasons to Fast

by Bishop John Guernsey

Fasting is the practice of deliberate and voluntary abstaining from usual nourishment (and/or other activities), which, when carried out with prayer, brings spiritual growth and adds supernatural power to our prayers. Since many of us have never fasted, let's look at the central question about fasting: Why do it? Why should we fast?

Here are 8 biblical reasons to make fasting a regular part of our Christian life and discipline.

1. Matthew 4:1-2: *"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."*

Why fast? Because Jesus fasted. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to fast as part of his spiritual life, how much more do you and I need to fast!

2. Matthew 6:16-17: *"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face...."*

Why fast? Because Jesus commanded us to fast. Note that Jesus said, not **if** you fast, but **when** you fast. Jesus expects fasting to be a part of the life of those who follow Him.

3. Exodus 34:28 (about Moses), 2 Samuel 12:17 (David), Esther 4:16 (Esther), Daniel 9:3 (Daniel), Ezra 8:21 (Ezra), Nehemiah 1:4 (Nehemiah), Acts 13:2 (Paul and Barnabas).

Why fast? Because the great leaders of the Bible fasted.

4. Ezra 8:21: *“There...I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God...”*

Why fast? Because fasting humbles us and moves us to repentance. Arthur Wallis, author of the classic book on fasting, called *God’s Chosen Fast*, puts it this way, “When a person is willing to set aside the legitimate appetites of the body to concentrate on the work of praying, he is demonstrating that he means business, that he is seeking with all his heart and will not let God go unless He answers.”

5. Acts 13:2: *“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”*

Why fast? Because fasting helps us hear God’s voice and know His will. Fasting enables us better to understand God’s Word in the Bible, making it more meaningful and practical for our daily lives.

6. Esther 4:16: *“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”*

Why fast? Because fasting empowers our prayers.

7. Luke 2:36-38: *“[In the temple] there was also a prophetess, Anna.... She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to [Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus] at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”*

Why fast? Because fasting increases our usefulness to God.

8. Daniel 1:8-15: *“Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, ‘I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.’ Daniel then said to the guard..., ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.”*

Why fast? Because fasting is good for our health. It helps break our bondage to food and to our appetites.

But we must fast with the right motive. Zechariah 7:5 says, *“Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?’”*

There are ungodly motives for fasting. We do not fast with pride, so that others will think we are spiritual. We do not fast out of vanity, so we’ll lose weight and look better physically. We do not fast to earn anything from God (see the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, Luke 18:9-14). Our fasting should be coupled with loving action toward those in need (look at Isaiah 58).

We fast for the Lord, to draw close to him. Fasting is God's way for us to open ourselves to receive what He longs to give us freely. But remember, fasting must be coupled with prayer. For most of us it means spending more time in prayer than we usually do. Fasting is not a substitute for prayer. I view fasting as a multiplier of prayer. But 100 times zero is still zero. Fasting without prayer is just a hunger strike and God isn't moved by it. Don't just work through lunch at your desk and call it fasting; instead, take that time to be with the Lord. It's important to put times of prayer on your schedule as you fast.

A fast can be for any length of time. One can fast from a single meal or for a day or a number of days. If you haven't fasted much before, it is better to start with a short fast and fast regularly. A fast can be a so-called "normal" fast of water only or a "partial" fast, usually just juices along with water. An absolute fast, which means abstaining from water and food, are to be done only for very short periods and then only if you are sure God has directed you. In fact, during fasting you should drink much more water than normal.

There are those who should not fast: diabetics, women who are pregnant or nursing, those under a doctor's care for certain diseases or conditions. If you have any health concerns, you should consult your doctor before undertaking a multi-day fast.

I invite you this year into a deeper adventure with God, a time of seeking His face, drawing closer to Him. And in order that you might know Him more and experience the greatness of His power and the joy of His blessings, I challenge you to join in fasting and prayer. By God's grace, you will never be the same again.



Praise God ...

- That through the disciplines of prayer and fasting, we are given the privilege of participating with the Lord in the spreading of the Gospel and the establishing of His kingdom.
- That even in the midst of trials and hardship, God is working all these circumstances to make us increasingly more like His Son, Jesus.
- For the work God is doing in the life of our diocese and province: cleansing, restoring, transforming, healing and equipping.
- For the reformation God is working out in global Anglicanism – and the entire Christian Church. In the midst of chaos, He is building His Kingdom and refining His bride, the Church.
- For the many ANiC "projects" and church plants – the small, but growing congregations of faithful Anglicans that He is adding to our number.
- For faithful Anglican primates, bishops, clergy and laity – throughout the Communion – who are standing for truth even when their stand for Christ and His Word makes them targets of attack.

Confess if needed...

- The times that we have ignored the prompting of the Holy Spirit to consider fasting
- Our over-dependency on food and the comfort that it brings.

Please pray...

- That we would show our faith in God's goodness and sovereignty by cultivating **thankfulness**, **vigilance in prayer**, and by expressing **praise** in the midst of loss, adversity or injustice.
- For a new visitation of the **Holy Spirit** upon our bishops and clergy, our parishes and our diocese. Pray that the fresh wind of the Spirit will bring renewal, healing and empowerment..
- For **Bishops** Donald Harvey, Charlie Masters, Stephen Leung, Trevor Walters, Malcolm Harding and Ronald Ferris – and their families. Pray for spiritual and physical protection and renewal, for wisdom, and for a daily closer walk with God.
- For our **Archdeacons**: the Venerables Ron Corcoran (Vancouver Island), Dan Gifford (BC), Paul Charbonneau (Ontario), Tim Parent (Ottawa Valley), Paul Crossland (Prairies), Michael McKinnon (New England, USA), and Darrell Critch (Atlantic Region & Quebec).
- For **ANiC clergy** and their families, especially those experiencing spiritual and physical attack.

- That God would continue His work in and through the **Anglican Church in North America**
 - For **Archbishop Bob Duncan** (and wife, Nara), especially for wisdom as he seeks to give Godly leadership through any growing pains our province may encounter
- **GAFCon Primates and Fellowship of Confessing Anglican (FCA) leaders** – Pray for the Lord’s courage and wisdom as they seek to guide the orthodox reformation and realignment that is taking place throughout the Anglican Communion. Pray for the planning of the global gathering next fall.
- For strength and wisdom for the Presiding Bishop of the Southern Cone, **the Most Reverend Tito Zavala** and for God’s blessing on the **Province of the Southern Cone**.
- For the Archbishop of Canterbury designate, **Bishop Justin Welby**, who will replace Archbishop Rowan Williams in March. Pray that the Lord will grace him with wisdom, courage and the faithfulness to follow the teachings of Scripture in his decision-making.
- For the **ANiC congregations** that have lost their places of worship and are meeting in temporary facilities. May God comfort and pour out His blessing on them. May they be filled with the joy of the Lord as they seek His guidance for more permanent worship facilities. Pray especially for St Aidan’s (Windsor, ON) as the congregation is still embroiled in legal proceedings
- For the **Anglican Sojourner Fellowship** as it seeks to connect and encourage isolated Christians who live where there are no biblically faithful Anglican churches.
- For the faithful witness of the **Anglican Church in the war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo** In the midst of extreme poverty and violence.

You will continue to receive these Prayer Meditations automatically unless you ask to be removed from the ANiC mailing list. If you wish to be removed from the ANiC mailing list, simply reply to this email and note “Remove from mailing list” in the “Subject” line. (Please note that removal from the ANiC mailing list means that you will no longer receive any emails from ANiC.)