



Anglican Network in Canada

First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer – January 2014

"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 2014 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.

We encourage you to set aside the first Friday, **January 3rd**, 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.

Prayer Quote

"Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer."

John Bunyan 1628 - 1688

Affecting Resistance to Change Through Prayer

When I was in my early twenties, I was privileged to be a part of a marine mission led by an Anglican priest and his family. We navigated their 70-foot boat from Hanlan's Point at Toronto Island ultimately to Ft. Lauderdale, FL with several missionary trips to the Bahamas. While we were in Ft. Lauderdale, we became quite involved at an Episcopal church there; preaching, helping with their youth group, and sharing at their parochial school's chapel services.

It was a lively parish with lots of 30 something couples and young children. The presence of the Spirit was evident in their midst. But it had not always been so. In the memories of many parishioners was a horrific church fight that had driven out the previous rector and split the congregation. Many had left the church and gone elsewhere. Over what, you may ask? Well, I'm sure there were hidden factors and personality difficulties, but the presenting issue was the number of candles in the sanctuary behind the rail. In a desire to simplify, the (perhaps naïve?) rector had decided that there should only be two candles on the altar, not the six they had previously used. Also gone were the Paschal candle and the Advent wreath. The pain of the struggle was still evident in the eyes of those who had hung in there.

As a young (and also naïve) churchman, I was appalled to learn that a disagreement over candles could split a church. Wasn't the most important issue and focus to be the preaching of the Gospel? What would an increasingly skeptical world say when they saw "Christians" squabbling over such trivial things? Why couldn't people accept change more easily? Why was "the way we've always done it" so deeply embedded in the life of most parishes?

My experience may painfully remind you of situations that you walked through in previous churches before you became a part of the Anglican Network. It's the stuff of "religion", not true Christianity, right? It's "old wineskins" – something like that could never happen in our churches now, could it?

When we came together in 2008 from a variety of differing streams and churchmanship, we felt persecuted, misunderstood, misrepresented, and maligned by our old denomination. We were willing to sacrifice our church buildings if it came to that, in order to stand for the truth of the transforming Gospel message. We were willing to put up with setting up chairs and sound systems every Sunday in cramped, less-than-ideal rented facilities, and we were grateful for allies of whatever stripe who felt the same way that we did and whose ultimate commitment was to love and serve the Lord Jesus. High church, low church, charismatic, evangelical – it didn't matter. There was somebody shooting at us and were taking cover... together.

But what happens when the shooting stops, when the battle is over? What happens in our own parish when that sense of persecution abates, and things return to normalcy? Are we hearing grumbles about the inconveniences of not having our own building? Are the all-too-familiar complaints concerning worship music styles or changes in liturgies resurfacing? As we seek to be more aggressive in reaching lost generations for Christ, is there a discontent in the fact that things aren't always the way they used to be?

During Jesus' earthly ministry, his most difficult adversaries were the Pharisees – the religious leaders of the day. They reacted to him because, at every point, he seemed to be advocating radical change to all the rules and traditions on which they had built their lives and careers. "You have heard it said... but I say..." was an all-too-familiar exhortation coming from Jesus.

He also saved some particularly pointed accusations for those religious leaders whose teaching did not bring life but instead brought bondage and misery.

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. Matt. 23: 13-15 ESV

Let me ask you a difficult question. What if Jesus were to come to our churches as the new rector? We know that anything that did not have its roots and foundations in Scripture, he would lovingly, yet quickly eliminate or change. Any activity or program that did not promote spiritual growth and holiness in our character would soon disappear. Any traditions that existed for their own sake and did not enhance the spreading of the Gospel message would quickly be removed. Read chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation to see how passionately Jesus feels about the condition of his Church, and the lengths to which he is willing to go to keep it pure.

And, Church, how would we react to this new rector? Would we welcome him with great rejoicing and open arms? Or would we resist and frustrate the changes that he was trying to bring about because our security and comfort are inextricably tied to the familiar and the way we've always done it?

As we enter a new year, I want to extend a challenge to myself and to all of you who intercede for our diocese and your own parish. Ask yourself this question – is there anything in me that is resistant to change that the Holy Spirit is seeking to bring to my life and to my church? Am I an agent of Spirit-led reformation or do I consistently resist anything that threatens my comfort level? May we all be brutally honest with ourselves as we ask the Holy Spirit to show us what is truly in our hearts.

Secondly, would you join me in aggressively praying for open minds and pliable hearts in ANiC – from our bishops right down to our Sunday School children – that we will be sensitive to the Spirit's leading and courageous enough to take the risk of following his direction? Pray against "crystallization" that will inevitably settle upon any church unless... **unless we actively pray for a fresh and continuing outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us all.**

Finally, let us resolve to pray for a re-ignited focus and passion for the lost, dying souls of our neighbourhoods and cities. Any changes that the Holy Spirit is seeking to bring to our church life, I believe, will be to get our eyes off ourselves looking inward, and set our vision on those things that matter most to our Heavenly Father – reaching those that are to be saved and brought into his family.

And it won't happen if we don't pray, and pray fervently!

Heavenly Father, we so easily slip to old, comfortable ways that please our carnal nature but are not ultimately beneficial to the coming of Your Kingdom. Forgive us, we pray, for resisting Your Spirit, and help us to enter 2014 with a fresh, Spirit-directed resolve to be flexible and open to even the slightest nudge of your Spirit's direction. Keep us from "crystallization", and revive us again. In the mighty Name of Jesus, our Saviour and Coming King. Amen.

Garth V. Hunt+



Praise God ...

- For this New Year and new beginning... and for all He has in store for us in 2014.
- For the incredible privilege that we have in prayer – immediate access to Almighty God at any time of day or night. Thank Him for the joy of sharing in the privilege of bringing His redemption to fallen humanity.
- 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...

- Times where we have allowed fear of the unknown and resistance to change to cause us to grumble, thereby causing disunity in the Body of Christ and impeding the spread of the Gospel.

Please pray...

- 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, Ronald Ferris and Malcolm Harding (retired) – 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) – and our Dean of Multicultural Ministries, the Very Rev Dr Archie Pell..
- For all of our **ANiC clergy** and families, especially those experiencing spiritual and physical attack.
- 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.
- That God would continue His work in and through the **Anglican Church in North America**.
- For **Archbishop Bob Duncan** (and wife, Nara), especially for health and 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 in the Anglican Communion.
- **Southern Cone** – Pray for Presiding Bishop Tito Zavala in his primatial duties and for this province which includes much of South America.
- For the Archbishop of Canterbury **Justin Welby**. 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 Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada (**ARDFC**) as it raises funds for a training and education centre in the **Diocese of Recife** (Brazil).
- For **all the Christians in the Middle East** who are facing increasing pressure and persecution as many of their countries embrace a more aggressive and extreme form of Islam.
- For **those who serve us and are in authority over us** – our police forces, our armed forces, our emergency responders, our municipal elected officials, our provincial MLAs and premiers, and our federal MPs and Prime Minister.