

## First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer – February 2015

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people . . . This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2: 1-4 ESV*

Welcome to our February 2015 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, <b>February 6<sup>th</sup></b>, as a day of prayer and fasting 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;"><b>Prayer Quotes</b></p> <p><i>Prayer is so simple. It is like quietly opening a door and slipping into the very presence of God. There, in the stillness, to listen to His voice, perhaps in petition or only to listen. It matters not. Just to be there in His presence is prayer.</i> author unknown</p>
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### “Wasting” Time with God

As I write this meditation, January is rapidly drawing to a close: January, the month of new beginnings, resolutions made and fresh initiatives begun. Over the closing months of 2014, we have asked you to consider embracing two new prayer commitments; praying for Bishop Charlie’s 5 strategic priorities and also praying daily for revival in our day. Two heavy commitments, I realize.

Perhaps, like me, you’ve already missed some days, or maybe you haven’t started, despite the best of intentions. January is also described as the month of broken resolutions, blown diets, and the return of old patterns of behavior. It can be discouraging, to say the least!

Well, here’s a suggestion that may help you re-engage praying about these weighty matters. Before you ever begin to intercede, waste some time with God. Now before you get offended with me over my choice of words here, let me hasten to explain. A pastor friend of mine coined this term, “wasting time”, with reference to hanging out together with no specific agenda. He said, “I so enjoy being with you, being in your presence, that I’d like to come and just chill with you. We could sit on the deck, or go fishing, or take a drive in the country or a hike in the woods. The point is that we don’t need to be in heavy discussion about pastoral matters, the ills of the church or what’s wrong with the world. We can just BE together.”

Frankly, it was a revolutionary thought for me. After all, my time is precious and I’ve got important things to do and places to be, right? Just being together doesn’t accomplish anything! Where’s the productivity in that? What’s the point? But then I began to think about the people in my life that I’m closest to, my wife and sons, and a couple of cherished friends. As I considered my relationships with them, I became aware that we often “wasted time” together. Sometimes, it involves just being in the same room together without words even being spoken, and yet the silence is never awkward. There is love being shared even in the absence of words.

I believe the unknown author of the prayer quote above understood this as it applied to his relationship with the Lord: “*Prayer is so simple. It is like quietly opening a door and slipping into the very presence of God. There, in the stillness, to listen to His voice, perhaps in petition or only to listen. It matters not. Just to be there in His presence is prayer.*”

Just to be there, just to “Be still and know that I am God”. Has it ever occurred to us that God might want to “waste some time” with us? To have some precious communion with us that is not filled with a frenetic list of petitions and intercessions? Would we call up a cherished loved one and simply give them a long list of things that we’d like them to do and then immediately hang up? Nor should we with God.

Intercession will be a burdensome task over the long haul if we don’t also cultivate intimacy with our loving Father by spending time in his presence, simply to enjoy being with him, delighting in the pleasures of knowing him and the relief of being known by him. Of all the biblical characters, King David and the other psalmists seem to have best understood this reality. Look at some familiar verses in this light:

*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*  
Psalm 42:1-2 ESV

*My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.*  
Psalm 84:2 ESV

*O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.*  
Psalm 63:1-2 ESV

David wrote this last psalm in the desert, making his analogy very apt and most relevant to his circumstances. As I read this, I ask myself, “Have I ever known thirst? I mean real thirst where you might die without a drink of water?” For David, spending time in God’s presence was like that - a matter of life and death for him. It’s like being on foot in the Sahara with an empty canteen! But can you hear David’s heart here? Can you hear his passion for God’s presence? Note that he’s not desperate for God to **do** something. No, he’s desperate **for Him** – “*my soul thirsts **for you**; my flesh faints **for you**.*”

But what of God? Is he really interested in “wasting time” with the likes of me? Surely he has much more important things to do than that! Do you remember the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* when Dorothy and her friends first encounter “the great and terrible OZ”? They approached the wizard with overwhelming trepidation and fear for their very lives as a result of his pyrotechnical demonstration. Although our awesome God is far greater than any pretender like Oz, with his children he is first a loving father. But many Christians seem to struggle in prayer because they aren’t certain in their hearts of God’s real attitude towards them.

So, let’s look at one of my favourite verses in the Old Testament:

*The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take **great delight** in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will **rejoice over you with singing.**” Zephaniah 3: 17 NIV*

Does this sound like a God whose agenda is too full to hang out with us? Here we see a “mighty warrior” God who is always with us, who takes great delight in us, and who rejoices over us with singing! Let these phrases penetrate not just your theology, but your heart of hearts. He deeply desires to spend time with you!

Okay, so how do we deepen our delight in spending time with God? Here are a few thoughts on entering in God’s presence without a long prayer list:

1. Recognize that we come solely and utterly on the basis of the Blood of Jesus. No amount of theological understanding, academic training, spiritual maturity, days of fasting, spiritual giftedness, service and good works will ever get us past the outer court of his tabernacle. We’ll never deserve it or earn our way in. It is a gift; it is **THE gift**.
2. Ask God to give you a fresh hunger and thirst for His presence. Desire intimacy with Jesus more than anything, but also recognize that even that is the work of the Holy Spirit, not something we can “work up” in our own strength. We might want to pray something like, “Lord, I want to spend intimate time with you more than personal success, financial security, being proven right in my theology, my fear of appearing foolish, my life itself!”

3. Come into His presence through the scriptural door of praise and worship. Psalm 100: 4 says *"I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart; I will enter His courts with praise."* Try singing to the Lord, just on your own. If you play an instrument, use it; if not, use a worship album. Some people find it helpful to use the daily offices in the Book of Common Prayer. You might also read the Psalms out loud.
4. Cultivate His presence. Set aside a daily time that's not negotiable. First thing in the morning works for many, and do it before you check your emails or social media. Try to find a "prayer closet" where you can be alone and uninterrupted. This will be challenging if you have young children, but perhaps you could ask for help from family members to protect this time with the Lord. As you begin, tell Him of your love for Him, and take time to listen for his voice, delighting in you. If your mind wanders, and it will, don't feel guilty or a failure, just come back to focus on the Lord.
5. Use waiting time wisely. This has been a revolutionary thought to me. See waiting as a gift from God, rather than a hindrance and time waster. You know what I mean: standing in line in a grocery store, at the bank or post office, caught on the highway in a traffic jam or border crossing. Rather than fuming internally by the delay, I try now to just "slip away" and gaze at his beauty and hear Him say to me "I delight in you, and I love 'wasting time' with you!"

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### **Praise God ...**

- **That He reigns supreme.** Despite the chaos and evil in the world, God is working out His purposes for His glory and our good!
- **That He delights to spend time with us** as parents delight to be around their children.
- For the **privilege of interceding** on behalf of those around the world who are in desperate need.
- For the incredible **gift that God has given us in prayer** – immediate access to our Father at any time of day or night. Thank Him for the incredible privilege of participating with him through prayer in his grand redemption plan.
- 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 **held God at arm's length**, fearful of true intimacy with him.
- Our **fear in sharing Jesus with others** when we have opportunities to do so. Sometimes we have allowed embarrassment and fear of rejection to force us into silence.

### **Please pray...**

- For our new primate **Archbishop Foley Beach** - Pray for great wisdom, courage and strength as he gives leadership to our province. May God glorify Himself through the ACNA.
- For **Bishop Charlie Masters** (& Judy) – Pray for our new diocesan bishop as he leads ANiC. May God grant him vision, spiritual protection, and spiritual and physical renewal.
- For **Bishop Don Harvey** (& Trudy) – Pray for Bishop Don in his new roles as ANiC's episcopal vicar and as senior chaplain to the ACNA College of Bishops.
- For ANiC's suffragan bishops: **Stephen Leung** (& Nona) and **Trevor Walters** (& Dede). Pray for discernment, energy and grace as they care for their clergy and congregations. Also for Bishops **Ron Ferris** and **Malcolm Harding**.
- 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 **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. Pray especially for the rector, Canon Tom Carman, the leadership, and the people of **St Aidan's, Windsor, ON**, as they work through the financial impact of a surprisingly unfavourable legal decision.
- For the **Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada** (ARDFC) as it begins to raise funds for the drilling of three wells which will bring clean, safe water to 7500 people in the Diocese of Wau, South Sudan. Pray also for peace in this troubled country.
- For **Canon Andrew White** and his ministry team in the Middle East. Pray for courage, safety and the provision of basic needs for them and the people that they serve.
- 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, MPPs and premiers, and our federal MPs and Prime Minister.
- For **God's wisdom for the world's leaders** with regard to the Ukraine, Syria and Iraq. Pray that the evil one's agenda for violence, hatred and bloodshed would be averted. Pray for protection of innocent civilians – adults and children – who so often are the victims in today's urban warfare.