



Anglican Network in Canada

First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer – March 2014

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4: 6 ESV

Welcome to our March 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, **March 7th**, 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

We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.

Oswald Chambers 1874-1917

“Rejoice, Don’t Worry, and Pray!”

Over the years, we have used a variety of scripture verses as our banner at the top of this page – verses that exhort us to be a people of prayer, including the above verse this month from Philippians. As I was praying about our theme for this month, it became clear to me that we should take a more thorough look at this great word of encouragement to bring all our needs and concerns to the Lord in prayer.

But first, here is a little background. The apostle Paul is writing from prison in Rome to the church in Philippi, the first church plant in Europe. It is ten years since he planted this little fellowship as recorded for us in Acts 16. You will remember the story of Paul and Silas being summoned in a vision to come over to the region of Macedonia where they began to share the Gospel with a group of women meeting by a river, and then the enormous uproar caused by Paul’s driving out a spirit of divination from a slave girl who had earned her owners lots of money by telling fortunes. The passage continues with the account of the apostles being thrown into jail on false charges and how at midnight, as they were praising God by singing hymns aloud, an earthquake shook the building to its very foundations and their chains fell off setting them free. The jailer was about to take his own life when he realized that his prisoners were loose, but Paul called out to him, “*Don’t harm yourself. We are all here!*” Then follows the delightful account of the jailer taking them home, bathing their wounds, and committing his life to Christ, along with his whole family. It’s a fabulous story!

So, it is to this church that Paul now writes, a decade later, assuming that he will never see them again this side of eternity, and pouring out his pastor’s heart with loving exhortation. In chapter one Paul, contemplating his own probable death, wrestles with whether it’s better to stay alive or to go to be with his beloved Lord Jesus. Chapter two contains that glorious hymn of praise to Jesus about his ultimate expression of humility in taking the form of a servant and being obedient even unto death on a Roman cross. In chapter three, we see the passion with which Paul loves his Lord as he says “*I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*” Nothing else matters; nothing is as important; indeed, nothing can compare with the joy of knowing Jesus in an intimate, loving relationship.

This is the context of our passage, where Paul closes his letter, as he always does, with some practical instructions on the Christian life and walking day by day in the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:4-9 ESV

How can a man in a cruel prison facing almost certain death exhort his readers to rejoice? Does that appear reasonable to anyone? By the same token, how can we, when we are facing difficulties, hardships, illnesses, unemployment, broken relationships be expected to rejoice?

The key is in the phrase “**rejoice in the Lord**”. It’s not a rejoicing in our circumstances, be they good or bad. No, it’s a rejoicing in the Lord **in the midst of our circumstances**. We rejoice in all that the Lord has done for us in providing forgiveness of sins, release from the prison of guilt and condemnation, our inheritance as an adopted child of God and co-heir with Jesus, and the ultimate promise of eternal life with Him! Jesus is the Lord of our circumstances.

Paul goes on to elaborate: “*The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*”

Echoing the words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount (Matt 6) where he says, “*do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on*”, Paul exhorts the church, “Don’t be anxious, **don’t be a mighty worrier**; take everything to the Lord in prayer.” This is not some trite pop philosophy like the “*Don’t worry! Be happy!*” mantra that was popular a number of years ago. This is attitude reversing – a radical paradigm shift.

The phrase “the Lord is at hand” may be speaking of the Lord’s second coming; His glorious return to claim His bride. It may also be referring to His presence – being right here with us by His Spirit – that we experience as we lay hold of His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. But, either way, we can rejoice in the Lord, right in the midst of troubles, just like Paul and Silas did in that Philippian prison. We can take our circumstances, with thanksgiving, right to the throne of God, knowing that He deeply cares about what we’re going through. That’s why we can rejoice: The Almighty Creator of the Universe, our Father, cares about us!

Now Paul knew that to say “Stop worrying” or “Don’t think about your problems” is sometimes very difficult. It’s hard to actively choose to **not** think about something. To prove my point, let’s try a little experiment: Imagine a pink elephant as vividly as you can. It is hot pink! Does it look like a cartoon character or is like an real elephant in the zoo? Okay, now, I want you to NOT think about the pink elephant. Think of anything else but the pink elephant. Whatever you do, don’t think about pink elephants... What are you thinking of? How many times did the pink elephant cross your mind? Quite a few times, right?

So Paul says, “Rather than trying **not** to worry or stress over those circumstances, **actively choose** to think about something else.” Rather than trying to not think about pink elephants, choose to think about something lovely. Listen to his instructions:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

A formidable 19th century Scottish preacher, Thomas Chalmers, once made this insightful statement: “*A new affection is more successful in replacing an old affection than simply trying to end it without supplanting it with something better. Even the strongest resolve is not enough to dislodge an affection by leaving a void*”

Do you see it? Rather than being preoccupied with the old anxieties and passions, trying to resist them, let’s **displace** them with an affection and passion that is far superior to anything the world has to offer!

Let's replace worry and stress with rejoicing in the Lord – with joyful thoughts about our beautiful Saviour and coming King! Paul concludes by saying in essence, “Just put into practice what I taught you and what you saw me do. Rejoice in the midst of your circumstances like Silas and I did when they threw us into your jail, and God's peace will surround you and hold you, just like it did for us.”

What is the fruit of rejoicing as we carry all our cares to the Lord in prayer? What happens if we do?

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Peace in the storm – what a great promise! And what is that peace doing? **Guarding** our hearts and minds! How we need that in these unsettling days of such global unrest and domestic strife!

Can we do that, Intercessors? Can we heed Paul's exhortation to “*rejoice in the Lord*”? Let's actively choose to follow his example and displace negative, critical or fear-ridden thoughts by focusing our mind on our glorious and awesome Saviour!

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice! Amen!

Garth V. Hunt+



Praise God ...

- 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 peace that guards our hearts and minds, even in the midst of the storm.
- 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 stress and anxiety to weigh us down and to rob us of our ability to rejoice in the Lord, and where our thoughts have been unhealthily focused on the unresolved issues, rather than on our magnificent Saviour and Lord.

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 in these few remaining months before he steps down as primate. Pray also for the Lord's wisdom in the election of his successor.

- **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 raising funds for a pediatric ward for a busy clinic in South Sudan.
- For **all the Christians in the Middle East** and parts of Africa 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.