



# Anglican Network in Canada

## First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer – April 2013

*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 April 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 <b>the first Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup></b>, 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><b>Prayer Quotes</b></p> <p><i>Let no man ever persuade you that any religion deserves to be called the Gospel, in which repentance toward God has not a most prominent place.</i> J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)</p>
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## THE PRIVILEGE OF REPENTANCE

Wasn't this Easter season glorious?? The church calendar affords us the unique opportunity of being able to focus on each of the days' events during Holy Week, from the anguish of Gethsemane through the horror and cruelty of the merciless crucifixion, the pivotal act of Jesus' selfless sacrifice, to the splendor of the resurrection, His ultimate triumph over sin and death. This year, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday were particularly moving as I reflected on the dreadful cost of my sin, and the glorious liberty that we all can experience when we bend our knee in repentance and submission to our magnificent Saviour.

But sadly, for decades throughout much of western Christendom, an insidious and potent deception has been at work within the Church. It was at epidemic levels in the denomination from which many of us withdrew; for some, at great cost. Despite numerous references in our liturgies to the concept of "sin", there has been a systematic attempt, emanating from pulpits and seminary classrooms alike, to expunge it from our theology, and, even from our vocabulary. The very notion of sin, original or otherwise, we are told, is old-fashioned, unenlightened and it makes people squirmy and uncomfortable. After all, we stopped talking about "hellfire and brimstone" in Anglican circles at least 100 years ago and the term "sin" needs to follow hard on its heels.

Two dear friends of my parents would not come to my father's church because they were sure that they were not "miserable offenders" and therefore could not say the general confession in the Book of Common Prayer. Many churches have dropped the confession from their liturgy because to them it is offensive and schismatic. A few months ago, a local minister was quoted as saying to a newspaper interviewer upon his installation, "Well, I'm certainly not the kind of preacher who will tell people that they are sinners!"

Perhaps they're right on this one... couldn't we find a different way of saying the same thing? Talk about our weak spots or our moral frailty? Couldn't we just put more emphasis on God's unconditional love and acceptance of everyone? After all, we'll drive visitors and potential newcomers away if we talk about "sin"... won't we?

Let me ask you a direct question? If you wanted to weaken the message of the Gospel so that it lost its power to actually transform lives, what would you do? How would you attack? One great strategy would be to totally discredit the doctrine of “sin”. Look at the results when that strategy is embraced:

- If you remove the reality of sin, then I am not a miserable sinner.
- If I’m not a sinner, then I don’t need a Saviour to die for me
- If there’s no need for a Saviour, then Jesus died the cruelest death possible for absolutely no reason. He’d have been better to live out the rest of his life, teaching, telling neat parables, accepting people.
- If he died in vain, with no purpose accomplished, then arguably we can’t believe that Jesus rose again, either
- If there’s no real, physical resurrection for him, then there isn’t for us either, and as Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”  
1 Corinthians 15: 17-19

So all we’re left with are some pleasant liturgies, some familiar stories and thoughtful insights into life – but a religion that is totally devoid of the power to change anyone, or the hope of a future spent with God. At the end of the day, all I have that really I can count on is me, and, sad to say, there are many in the Church for whom this is the Gospel! And people wonder why so many are leaving!

So why is the concept of sin vital? Because God has the antidote to its deadly poison, only one antidote, it’s called Repentance. It’s the only Key that He has given us to open the door into His presence. We’re like latchkey kids coming home with the key around our neck, and upon unlocking the door, we discover that Dad is indeed at home!

Let’s briefly look at a passage from John’s first letter to see if he can throw any light on all this:

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*  
1 John 1:8-10, ESV

If we claim to be without sin, or that “sin” is just an archaic concept that has no place in the 21 century, then “we deceive ourselves”, and, John, who was our eyewitness to all the Holy Week events, says that we call God a liar.

This is serious stuff. Why? Because God considers the confession and repentance of sin a gift from Him, an opportunity, a touch-point to cleanse us and set us free from the ravages of our sin. God calls us to repent, but not to make us feel miserable and disqualified from life with Him – we’re not being sent to the principal’s office, with our tails between our legs, like bad school children. When in times past, the GAFCon primates have asked the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church of the US to repent from the direction they were headed, it wasn’t an ecclesiastical spanking, it was a deep cry from the heart to allow God to do what he does best - forgive sins.

Thomas Cranmer and the architects of the Book of Common Prayer placed the first two verses of 1 John 2 amongst the “Comfortable” words that prepare us for Communion. You’ll recognize them:-

Hear also what Saint John saith:-

“If anyone sin, we have an Advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous; And He is the propitiation for our sins.” Comfortable words, comforting words, right from our service of Holy Communion.

There is such joy in being able to repent, and it is such an incredible privilege:

- our conscience is relieved and lightened, no matter what we’ve done
- the accusation and self-condemnation can be silenced
- we can be purified from all the results of our sin
- we can enter the very presence of God, unashamed and without guilt, delighting in fellowship with Him

- because He did die for a purpose, and did rise from the dead, we have a hope of an eternity to spend with Him, totally unshackled by even the presence of sin

In closing, let me encourage you to reflect carefully on some very well-known verses from Psalm 51, a psalm we may have considered only during Lent. Don't let familiarity rob you of the impact of the heart-felt repentance that these words express. They are magnificent, and they are poignant. Allow this prayer to minister to you as you linger over it.

*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

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

- For the incredible sacrifice that Jesus, our Advocate and the Propitiation for our sins, has made on our behalf.
- 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 taken the cost of our forgiveness for granted or compromised our message by minimizing our desperate need of repentance.

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

- That each of us would see more clearly **the privilege and joy of repentance** and experience the freedom and joy that true repentance releases in us.
- 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) – and our **Dean** of Multicultural Ministries, the Very Rev Dr Archie Pell..

- For our three upcoming **Regional Assemblies**: The eastern assembly is April 17-19 in Burlington, while both the western and Asian & multicultural assemblies are April 17-20 at Good Shepherd Church in Vancouver, BC.
- 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 global gathering this October in Kenya.
- For the new Archbishop of Canterbury **Justin Welby**, who was enthroned on March 21. 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 awaits the court's response to their appeal.
- 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 **Christians in Egypt** who are facing increasing pressure and persecution as the country moves in a decidedly Islamist direction.

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