



First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer April 2016

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 2016 First Friday Call to Prayer. Our aim is to provide you with teaching that we trust will be an encouragement to you. We will also provide you with praise items and prayer requests coming from within ANiC, ACNA and the Anglican Communion.

<p>We encourage you to set aside the first Friday, April 1st, 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 style="text-align: center;"><i>“Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones 1899-1981</p>
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“I Just Can’t Do It!”

Last week I celebrated my 72nd birthday. Now that’s not really old by many standards, but it’s definitely older than I’ve ever been! As some of you may know, I’ve also been struggling with the results of a heart condition known as *atrial fibrillation* – a fancy medical term for a rapid and irregular heartbeat. It’s not serious if dealt with, but as the treatment process unfolds over several months, I have found that between the results of the condition itself and the prescribed meds, I am extremely weak, short of breath, and have very little energy, even for normally light tasks. There are more times in the day than I care to admit when my response to previously easy chores is to cry out, “I just can’t do it!” As Jesus said of the disciples in Gethsemane, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!”

Now, throughout this season I’ve had lots of time to meditate on Scripture, pray, and think about my spiritual walk and prayer life. I definitely can see some parallels between my current physical condition and my spiritual one. There is a weakness in the flesh that becomes more apparent the closer I come to the Lord. Paul describes life attempted in the strength of the flesh in the latter portion of Romans 7.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.
Romans 7:18 ESV

Let me ask you a personal question – is your prayer life a bit like that? “I *want* to pray more, I *want* to get up earlier to spend time with the Lord, I *want* to go to the revival prayer meeting our church has started, *but* somehow, I just can’t do it. I can’t get there! I *try* to pray for an hour but, somehow . . .”

Our church, St. George’s, Burlington, is in the midst of a Sunday sermon series on the Book of Judges. Naturally, we have been struck by the narrative of Gideon whom God raised up to deliver Israel from a vast army of neighbouring nations who had allied themselves against God’s people. A classic spiritual principle is depicted so inescapably clearly in Gideon’s story in Judges 6 and 7 – God *never* intends us to do what he asks us to do *in our own strength* – *in the strength of the flesh!* In the case of Gideon, God made it abundantly obvious by sending home the vast majority of Gideon’s army lest there be any temptation to take the glory and credit for the ensuing victory. Gideon could so easily have said, “I can’t do this!” and God would have said, “I know! I’m glad you’re finally catching on!”

During one of my lowest times of my struggle with this heart condition and weakness, the Lord used a familiar and favourite Psalm to remind me once again of who it is that provides the strength to win victories. Let me share some of the gems from Psalm 18 that spoke to my discouraged heart:

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
Psalm 18:2 ESV

The first thing that this passage does is remind us of God's great protection for us in a variety of colourful images; rock, fortress, refuge, shield, horn, stronghold. There is no need for attempts at self-protection. They are futile anyway.

*He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for **they were too mighty for me**. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.* Psalm 18:16 – 19 ESV

Even when the odds are ridiculously stacked against us, as they were in Gideon's situation, the Lord rescues and delivers us from strong enemies who are too mighty for us to deal with in our fleshly strength. How glorious is this thought when it finally gets through to us!

For it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness. For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. Psalm 18:28-29 ESV

For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?— the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. Psalm 18:31 – 36 ESV

Now look at the ways that the Lord's provision supplies all that David needs:

- the Lord is the source of light for his lamp, dispelling his darkness
- with the Lord enabling him, he can run against a whole troop of soldiers or leap over a wall
- the Lord equips him with supernatural strength and righteous integrity
- the Lord guides his feet with dexterity, setting him in a secure vantage point
- the Lord skilfully trains him so that he has the strength to bend a bow of bronze
- the Lord has provided David with the shield of **His** salvation and he is supported by the very right hand of God.
- the gentleness of God made David a great king, and **He** keeps his feet from slipping

What an amazing array of provisions that God has for David with whom he enjoys such an intimate relationship and whom He calls "a man after His own heart"! God called David to be a shepherd, a warrior, and then Israel's greatest king, and He gave him everything that he needed to fulfill his calling. There was no reason for David ever to say, "I just can't do it".

And it is no different for us in our walk with God and in our daily prayer life. What is way too hard for us is never too hard for the Lord! The apostle Paul, in his succinct, very non-poetic way, expressed this principle like this:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ESV

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 ESV

Understanding God's desire for us to be solely dependent on Him has implications in every aspect of our Christian life as we learn to trust Him no matter how difficult the situation we're facing may be. But perhaps you've never considered our need to be solely dependent on Him in our prayer life as well. We may say, "Well, surely that's the part that **we** do, right?" And yet, in this time of more extreme physical weakness than I have ever experienced before, I'm learning that even in prayer I need Jesus more and more. I'm learning to relax, to be at peace in His presence, not having to accomplish anything in my own strength and resources but to let Him direct my conversation with Him along the lines that are pleasing and important to Him. And, you know, it takes the pressure off. I **can** do it, in Him.

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Praise God ...

- 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. Especially we praise the Lord for the continuing faithful witness by the GAFCon primates.

Please pray...

- For God's will to be done and for His Name to be glorified in the ongoing aftermath of the Primates' meetings in January. Pray especially for **the GAFCon Primates meeting this month in Chile**. May God grant them much wisdom and spiritual discernment.
- For our primate **Archbishop Foley Beach** (& Allison) – Pray for great wisdom, discernment, courage and strength as he gives leadership to ACNA in the days and months ahead.
- For **Bishop Charlie Masters** (& Judy) – Pray for our diocesan bishop as he leads ANiC. May God give him wisdom and vision for what the outcome of the primates' meetings means for ANiC. Pray also for spiritual protection, and spiritual and physical renewal.
- For **Bishop Don Harvey** (& Trudy) – Pray for Bishop Don in his roles as ANiC's episcopal vicar and senior chaplain to the ACNA College of Bishops.
- For **ANiC's suffragan bishops**: Stephen Leung (& Nona) – on sabbatical – and Trevor Walters (& Dede). Pray for discernment, energy and grace as they care for their clergy and congregations. Also pray for Bishops Ron Ferris (church planting in Langley) and Malcolm Harding (retired).
- For our **Archdeacons**: the Venerables Ron Corcoran (Vancouver Island), Dan Gifford (BC), Bruce Chamberlayne (Alberta & BC Interior), 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 **a major awakening**, a sovereign move of God in our churches and across our nations. **Rise Up, O God** we pray. Intervene, O Lord, in the midst of our decaying culture and society! Raise up **an army of intercessors** who will call out to you for a mighty visitation of your power and presence!
- For all **ANiC clergy** and families, especially those experiencing spiritual and physical attack.
- For the **ANiC congregations** that are meeting in temporary rental facilities. May God comfort and pour out His blessing on them, giving them solid hope for the future.
- For the **Anglican Relief & Development Fund Canada** (ARDFC) as it raises funds for farm tools, seeds, goats and agricultural training to address malnutrition and extreme poverty in 3 villages in Burundi - as well as for emergency aid appeals for Syrian Refugees and earthquake relief in Nepal.
- For the **Canadian federal government** as it considers the question of assisted suicide. Pray that the voices speaking on behalf of Life rather than death, such as the palliative care doctors, will be heard. Pray for legislation that is pleasing to God and a blessing to our nation.
- 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 as a new government is formed.
- For **God's wisdom for world's leaders** with regard to the Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and European nations reeling from terrorist attacks. Pray for the hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking safety and asylum in Europe and here in Canada. Pray for churches and communities that are welcoming refugees that they may be a witness to God's compassionate care, both by what they say and do.
- Pray for **protection of innocent civilians** – adults and children – who so often are the victims in today's warfare. Pray especially for the many Middle Eastern, Asian and African Christians who are brutally persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Bring before the Lord the Christians of Pakistan who were targeted yet again in the terrorist attack in Lahore over Easter.