



Anglican Network in Canada

First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer – December 2013

"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 December 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 the first Friday, December 6th, 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 Quote</p> <p><i>"Our prayers may be weak, stammering, and poor in our eyes. But if they come from a right heart, God understands them. Such prayers are His delight."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)</i></p>
<p><i>May God's rich blessings be with you, your family and friends, as you celebrate the wondrous birth of our Lord and Saviour this Christmas!</i></p>	

Praying Together – Does It Matter?

In the late 1880's, the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, John Charles Ryle, wrote a short booklet on the subject of prayer entitled *A Call to Prayer*. Bishop Ryle had gained both local and international prominence as a preacher, Bible expositor and writer, and brought a simple yet profound style to his presentations on practical and spiritual themes targeting ordinary parishioners in the pews. As the worldwide Anglican Communion of today brings forth new expressions of reformation, J.C. Ryle's works are being rediscovered and appreciated anew, by both orthodox Anglicans and evangelical Christians of other stripes.

In his booklet on prayer, Bishop Ryle presumes to challenge regular church-going Anglicans as to whether they have a practice of personal, private prayer. No doubt controversial at the time, he makes a definitive link between true conversion to Christ and the practice of prayer. He says, "God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do otherwise than they do. They must pray."

It is an invigorating read and I would highly recommend his booklet. I am always in the need of challenge in the area of my personal prayer life. I can offer a hearty "Amen" to Bishop Ryle as he concludes his booklet by saying, "I offer these points for your consideration. I do it in all humility. I know no one who needs to be reminded of them more than I do myself." Yes, prayer is absolutely vital to our spiritual health and well-being. It is our lifeline to the Father. You probably wouldn't be reading this meditation if you didn't believe this to be true.

But let me ask you this – is praying together with other Christians also important? Does it really matter if we just pray on our own? Does making the effort to attend a prayer gathering with other believers really make any difference?

To my mind, it's a question of both/and, not either/or. Both private prayer and corporate prayer are vitally important to the life of the individual Christian and the body of believers, the Church.

Let's look at what Jesus said concerning coming together in prayer:

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Matthew 18:19-20 ESV

In her book, *Jesus – Man of Prayer*, Sister Margaret Magdalen makes the point, "*There is no explanation given as to why special authority is given to a small group praying together. Jesus merely advocates something he himself had practiced with his disciples, for clearly he valued cooperation in the work of prayer.*" She goes on to say, "*If in prayer each of us becomes a channel for God to reach others, it means that in a group of people the channel widens for the inflow and outflow of his love. . . . We are the body of Christ and we need to know that, in prayer, we are linked with other members of the body in united concern and petition.*"

She concludes by saying, "*Although we know that even when we pray alone there is no such thing as private prayer when we belong to the body of Christ, we need those times when we express our corporateness literally by gathering in prayer together. We need the sense of support it gives, the increased energy of desire and the mutual comforting – strengthening. We grow disheartened when we always "go it alone".*

The early church certainly understood the importance of praying together. Acts 2 records that "*they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*" Not long after Pentecost, Peter and John were arrested and interrogated by the Sanhedrin for healing a lame man in the name of Jesus. Look what happened upon their release:

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God . . . And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. Acts 4: 23, 24, 31 ESV

Now I don't believe that every time the early church prayed together there were amazing divine pyrotechnics. Nor will there be every time that we pray together. But it is noteworthy that there was a release of power and great encouragement filled the hearts of each believer who was gathered together to pray.

Recently, I was struck by an image from the natural world that supports this fact. At our elderly summer cottage in Algonquin Park north of Toronto, we have a massive stone fireplace, built from rocks taken directly off our lakeside property. On a cold, damp evening in September, a roaring fire on the hearth wonderfully warms both the ambient temperature of the cottage and the hearts of all who behold it.

An enduring fire like that is constructed by strategically piling logs together in a structure that maximizes their proximity to one another. Together they make a blaze that throws off great heat and lasts for an amazingly long time. However, if one of the logs slips off the pile and rolls into the corner of the firebox on its own, it rapidly loses its flame and burns out within a short space of time. Indeed, one of the ways we are taught to extinguish an outdoor fire before leaving it is to separate all the logs from each other as much as possible before pouring on water. When the individual pieces of wood are dispersed, the flame is quickly lost.

So it is with us as Christians who believe in the power of prayer. We need the faith, passion, and gifts of the Spirit that each "log" brings to "the fire". God has called us to work together as a body, with different parts and functions, even in the area of prayer.

Does your parish have a weekly or monthly prayer gathering? Have you ever gone? Can you see the importance of each "log" contributing to the intensity of the "flame"? As we consider our New Year's resolutions for 2014, let me suggest that you consider regular attendance at a prayer time with other brothers and sisters, even on those occasions when it's a sacrifice to go. I believe that you will find, as I have, that the Lord richly blesses you. Yes, it really does matter that we pray together!

Garth V. Hunt+



Praise God ...

- 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 that privilege with other believers.
- 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, complacency or a false sense of inadequacy rob us of the opportunity of praying with other members of our parish family.

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 restored health and 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 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 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.