



First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer December 2016

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26 ESV

Welcome to our December 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, December 2nd, 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>“When we pray, God hears more than we say, answers more than we ask, gives more than we can imagine – in His own time and in His own way.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Nicky Gumbel</p>
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Reluctant to Pray

One of the most predominant themes that emerged from our recent diocesan synod in Vancouver concerned the desperate need for us all to grow in our experience of prayer. Bishop Charlie Masters, in his annual Charge to Synod, exhorted us specifically to be *“praying for an open door for the Gospel (Colossians 4:2-4)”* so that the Good News can be preached with power in our parishes, hometowns, and across our continent. He also reaffirmed his deep desire for us to be praying that his five ministry priorities, shared two synods ago, would more and more be a “transformational reality” in each of our parishes.

As ANiC’s national prayer coordinator since its inception in 2008, I was both moved and convicted by the bishop’s exhortation. I was moved with gratitude that our diocesan leaders are so committed to making prayer a priority because they recognize that, without prayer, nothing of significant lasting value for the Gospel will be accomplished. I was convicted by the realization that, despite my efforts through the years, we as a people of God (myself included) are still much better at talking about prayer than actually praying. We believe in the power of prayer; we believe in the vital importance of prayer. The fact that you are reading this article would suggest that you consider intercessory prayer to be of strategic importance to the growth of the Church and the spreading of the Gospel.

But, as I have had opportunity to speak with many of you at various diocesan gatherings, the stories I hear are remarkably similar. Prayer is typically left to a small band of older Christians (whom we call in our parish “the usual suspects”) because they’re the “prayer warriors”, the really spiritually mature ones (whom apparently God pays more attention to). Serious prayer, like praying for revival in our city or that the bishop’s 5 priorities would become part of our church’s DNA, is best left to the “experts”. From my perspective, this is such a shame because many committed Christians in our congregations are missing out on the tremendous privilege of participating through corporate prayer in God’s phenomenal plan of redemption for this planet!

A number of years ago, I led a weekend seminar in a number of ANiC churches entitled “Pursuing Intimacy with God” in which we sought to deepen our relationship with our heavenly Father. God’s desire is for each of His children to have as close and intimate relationship with Him as possible, and yet many of His kids are quite uncomfortable in His presence. We discovered the perhaps obvious principle that you can’t be intimate with someone that you don’t trust, and that you won’t trust someone that you do not really know. And so, we spent time exploring what the Father is really like so that we might know Him better in order to increase our trust level.

My observation over many years of prayer ministry is that the fundamental reason many of us don't pray much is because we are basically still uncomfortable in the presence of God. It's one thing to pray along with the Sunday morning liturgy or to recite the Lord's Prayer, but to choose to enter the "throne room of God" essentially on our own, complete with our muddy boots and runny noses, that's another matter entirely. All of our shame and guilt, that's lurking just below the surface, comes flooding back, aided by "the accuser of the brethren", and we feel dreadfully inadequate, unworthy and disqualified from asking anything of the Lord.

Friends, we suffer from what someone has called "Gospel amnesia" – we have forgotten all that God has accomplished for us through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Saviour, Jesus. We all need to be reminded, over and over, time and time again of what the Book of Common Prayer calls "*the remission of sins and all other benefits of His passion*". All that is necessary for our complete and total redemption has been accomplished for us by Jesus! That is why he exclaimed while dying on the cross, "It is finished!"

John Stott, the English Anglican cleric who was noted as a leader in the worldwide Evangelical movement and author of many excellent books including *Basic Christianity* and *Why I Am a Christian*, wrote the following in his book, *The Message of Romans*:

"We should constantly be reminding ourselves who we are. We need to learn to talk to ourselves, and ask ourselves questions: 'Don't you know? Don't you know the meaning of your conversion and baptism? Don't you know that you have been united to Christ in his death and resurrection?... Don't you know these things? Don't you know who you are?' We must go on pressing ourselves with such questions, until we reply to ourselves: 'Yes, I do know who I am, a new person in Christ, and by the grace of God I shall live accordingly.'"

According to God's Word, sin and the inevitable guilt and shame that accompany it no longer have dominion over us. Even the burden of trying to keep the Law has been removed from us!

*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are **not under law but under grace**.*

Rom. 6:14 ESV

*Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ**, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, **the new has come**. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 ESV

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can **boldly enter** heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, **let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him**. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.*

Hebrews 10: 19-22 NLT

As we daily remind ourselves of the Gospel, not just to have a tidy theology, but to apply all the truth of the Gospel to our everyday situations, we will discover a deepening love for Jesus, a gratitude for all He has accomplished, a growing trust of the Father and an ever-increasing comfort in His presence.

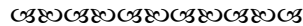
Then, prayer is no longer a mere duty or obligation, a rule that good Christians should obey. No, it can be a joy, a delight, an adventure beyond our wildest imagination! And we can make a significant difference to the spiritual climate in our neighbourhood, nation, and the world. Please, don't let Gospel amnesia rob you of this great delight that is our privilege as sons and daughters of the Father. Amen!

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***May God's rich blessings be with you and your family
as you celebrate the wondrous birth of our Lord and Saviour this Christmas!***

Collect for Christmas

O GOD, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come again to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. Amen.



Praise God ...

- For the many **wonderful promises given to us in Scripture**, including the ones listed above, that shape our inheritance as God's adopted sons and daughters.
- 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 **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 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 provides guidance and leadership of ANiC. May God grant him renewed courage, wisdom and vision. Pray also for physical protection and good health in the midst of his heavy travel schedule.
- 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) 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, BC) and Malcolm Harding (retired in Brandon, MB).
- 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 like has not been seen in our lifetimes. **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! Send out **labourers into the harvest**, O Lord!
- For the **Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada** (ARDFC) whose new project is helping the ACNA church plants in Cuba purchase a van. This van will meet their transportation needs and provide a means of revenue generation to reduce dependence on external financial support.
- For the **aftermath of the US Election** last month. We Canadians in ANiC stand with our sister parishes in New England during this critical time. May the Lord bring healing where there has been such contentious division, and may all who have been elected recognize their desperate need for God and turn to him for wisdom and strength as they prepare to take their respective offices.
- For all **ANiC clergy** and families, especially those experiencing spiritual and physical attack.

- For the **Christian doctors in Canada** as they seek God's wisdom for their response to the current legislation on assisted suicide. Pray that the voices speaking on behalf of Life rather than death will continue to be heard, voices such as the palliative care doctors. Pray that health care professional across Canada will have conscience rights to not be required to refer patients for euthanasia.
- 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 world leaders** with regard to conflicts in the Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq, and European nations struggling to absorb refugees. Pray for the hundreds of thousands of refugees who are seeking safety and asylum in Europe and here in Canada. Pray for those 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 refusal to renounce their faith in Jesus.