

# Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

Pandemic Special Edition

May 2020

*Serving, Supporting, and Encouraging Prayer*

## May You Live in Interesting Times

*National Director Paul Feheley*

*May You Live In Interesting Times* is a phrase that has been invoked in speeches by Western politicians for over a hundred years as an “ancient Chinese curse”, even though such a curse never actually existed. There is little or no doubt that these are ‘interesting times’ as we live through the worst pandemic that any of us have ever seen.

At its most recent meeting the executive of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer decided to send out a special edition of our newsletter related to the Covid 19 virus. We felt that there was a need to share with you some of our own feelings, struggles fears and discoveries while we live through these times, as well as to offer some specific prayers for you to use.

We applaud the variety of ways that our parishes are reaching out to people with online worship, bible study, children programs and a variety of ways for the community to gather. Within that we also recognize the pain and anxiety that isolation can cause through loneliness, fear, frustration, and depression. Our hope in offering this newsletter is to give you strength to use the gift of prayer to help bring a greater sense of calm, peace, and God’s presence into your life.

Almost everyone agrees that when things return to ‘normal’ nothing will be normal. Is it possible during this challenging time that you might discover a new richer and deeper relationship with God? Prayer can be very formal or amazingly simple -what ever works for you as there is no wrong way to pray. No matter how you do it by talking with God and sharing your hopes fears dreams and angst you open yourself up to hear God’s voice – that ‘still, small voice of calm’ that speaks through the din and tumult.

In the midst of the pandemic we are stressed and frightened, unsure about our future and it feels like everything has been turned upside down. It is critical to remember the virus does not have the last word. It does not define who we are- God does that- our identity belongs to God alone.

May the peace of God be with you and those whom you love this day and always. Amen.





## So Am I My Brother's, My Sister's Keeper?

Val Kenyon, National Chair

We all know the story of Cain and Abel from the book of Genesis, with the often quoted verse, "Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?' " (Genesis 4:10). In many ways this feels like a question we are asking ourselves a lot these days as we consider what our responsibility is to one another as we attempt to "flatten the curve" as Covid-19 impacts our communities. And of course the answer to the question above is yes, we are our brother's and our sister's keeper as it is clear from all that we have learned over these past months. Without doubt our actions impact one another. It is pure fiction to think otherwise. And so, let love be our guide, fuelling our prayers, forming our path forward, carefully and prayerfully in all that we do. Amen.



*Because of Your Love I Am Free* <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mckln/4814377195/>.

At our parish of St Anne's Byron Anglican Church in London, Ontario, we chose a time each day (knowing others were doing the same thing) to stop, light a candle, and say a prayer for all those both suffering and serving during this pandemic. For us it was 7:00pm. Why not suggest this to your parish and begin to share both your prayers and the hope born out of them.

~Val Kenyon

## Remembering the Magnolia Petals: Bringing Softness in a Time of Covid

By Val Kenyon

*See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.*

*Matthew 6:28, 29*



When I was a little girl, I was enchanted by my grandmother's magnolia tree. It sat quite prominently at the front of her house and in spring would produce the most delightful petals. Their colour was a beautiful pale pink and white and before too many days would pass, these petals would create a striking carpet beneath the tree. And, while all of this was visually captivating it was the *softness* of the petals that I still remember, being simultaneously surprised and pleased as each spring I would pick them up and discover this anew.

... can't

It is impossible to think of this tree without thinking of my grandmother. My Nano was not the kind of grandmother with whom one baked cookies, or sewed on buttons, or went for long walks in the park. She had for all of her life needed to make a living to support her family and while this would take her in many directions over the course of her life, during my childhood she would accomplish this by reaching out to the community around her.

For all of my young life this beautiful magnolia tree stood outside a home in downtown Toronto created by her to welcome in those leaving mental health institutions, returning to the community after many years of separation. It would be in this home that she would provide her guests with the basics of life of course, lots of good food, and a warm place to spend the night; she would however not stop there. As each new person would arrive as she discovered more of who they were, she would try to help them find a way that they could contribute to their life together, a way that suited who they were and their gifts, often pairing up several of them whose skills and abilities complemented one another.

Reminiscent of the magnolia pedals, as a child I watched her bring softness to the lives of many whom life had treated harshly, many who had given up on ever expecting anything “soft” from life.

In the beauty of this slowly emerging season, in the midst of a time filled with challenges of all kinds, I pause to offer prayers of thanks for my grandmother’s practical, loving and care-filled expression of a faith-filled life, (who, by the way, when her duties kept her from public worship would stop at the appointed hour of worship to read through the prayers from her prayer book, much as many of us are doing today) and realize that all around I am witnessing God at work in the many expressions of “softness” in countless acts of love.

Thanks be to God!

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This time of the pandemic (a word I never thought I’d be using regularly, by the way) has been a time of anxiety for me accompanied by a sense of floating along. I’m adrift in things I should do, but don’t, which, of course just adds to my sense of restlessness and anxiety. So how has my spirituality come to my aid in these unique circumstances? We have seen a proliferation of Zoom or YouTube worship services as parishes move our gatherings online. For me the one that has been my touchstone has been the simple compline service that our Bishop of Kootenay, Lynne McNaughton, has led every evening, since the virus cancelled worship. Although the Daily Office of Morning and Evening prayer have not been near and dear to my heart, Compline, the short, unassuming prayer service said in the late evening as we prepare for bed, has always been a favourite of mine. Now with the regularity of saying or rather praying Compline each evening, I have felt more grounded. This quiet time reminds me of God’s presence over and over and slowly but surely I’ve been drawn deeper within to the God who has always held me in the palm of God’s hand. It’s amazing how this twenty minutes has made such a difference to me. It’s not as if there is much change in the words day to day, or a homily to reflect upon and yet I find that different words touch me from one time to the next, refocusing my awareness from my anxiety to my assurance of God’s love and strength. To join us go to Diocese of Kootenay’s Facebook page and click on the video. Compline is live every evening at 8:30:pacific time, but there are over 6 weeks worth of videos available, so that whatever time zone you live in, Compline is there for you.

*~Jane Bourcet*

During our period of COVID-imposed restrictions, I have found it helpful to read, reflect on, and pray about things I might not normally look at. In particular, I have been drawn to the words of Julian of Norwich, who wrote in the midst of "The Plague" in England. Her positive thoughts and reassurance that God is in everything and is with us always, have helped shape how I'm living these days.

~Paul Dumbrille

## A Spiritual Guide During A Pandemic

Paul Dumbrille

Julian of Norwich lived in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries during a Pandemic, often referred to as "The Plague". She lived alone in a small enclosure as an anchoress attached to a church and wrote at length about the visions she received during a time when she was seriously ill. Her words are particularly apt in this time of Pandemic. To read a bit more about Julian you might wish to read a recent article from the ANGLICAN JOURNAL at

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/julian-of-norwich-a-theologian-for-our-time/?fbclid=IwAR0NEkrWiKcAnsil3AnKB6E6L-JhFghjfeamyHHqi4xjf2Te2Roz10NX-0A>

Below is a quote from her writings:

*In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss.  
In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving.  
You are our mother, brother, and Saviour. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvellous and plenteous grace.  
You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us.  
You are our maker, our lover, our keeper.  
Teach us to believe that by your grace  
all shall be well, and all shall be well,  
and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.*

Photo: "Dame Julian" sculpture at Norwich Cathedral. CC0 by Poliphilo



I was traveling in March, as the world was rapidly watching the impact of the pandemic really became known. Coming home to quarantine, I began offering a daily email to my parishioners, including prayers, scripture, hymn links, and 'faith challenge'. We all thought it would be a couple of weeks until we were back together... Alone with my dogs, I prayed... and decided to offer a sharing of dining-room prayers via technology. The format and source varies, but for about 20 minutes we pray: since 16 march, prayers are live-streamed every day at noon (Atlantic time) on our parish Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/stjohnslunenburg/> On Sundays, our worship follows our 'normal' pattern of BCP at 8.30 and BAS at 10.30. I'm still streaming from the dining room, so as to avoid any 'priestly privilege' by being in a locked-down church building (and to have my canine choir entertain!)

We have no idea what to expect as we venture into discerning our new normal - but we do know that prayer will remain a strong part of it. Folks who haven't entered our doors are joining us daily, and our 'pew regulars' are commenting on a strengthened faith, and through the too-many tragedies in Nova Scotia - we know that God is with us, connecting us all through the gift of prayer.

~Laura Marie Piotrowicz



In these unusual times of staying home and physical distancing we must think of new and additional ways of interacting with God and each other. As a member of our parish's prayer group I, along with others, call weekly to several members of the parish as well as pray for those who need prayer. They are very appreciative of the connection and sometimes request help. Many of our parish's activities and new one's have found ways of connecting virtually. Since we are unable to physically receive communion, I found the prayers on our website to be helpful.

~Win Mizon

## Nourished Through Prayer

Win Mizon

The Reverend Nils Chittenden, Rector of St. Stephen's Church in Armonk, New York, shared a beautiful prayer from the Anglican Church of South Africa for those who are unable to physically receive communion. He writes, "In apartheid South Africa, many prisoners were denied the sacraments and had to find other ways of taking Spiritual Communion. This prayer found its way into the 1989 Anglican Church of South Africa Prayer Book as a help to others who could not receive.

*Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.*

*May your body and blood be my food and drink.*

*May your passion and death be my strength and life.*

*Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.*

*May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.*

*Let me not run from the love which you offer but hold me safe from the forces of evil.*

*On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.*

*Keep calling to me until that day comes when, with your saints, I may praise you forever.*  
*Amen.*

One of Teresa's of Avalon (an ancient mystic) most famous teachings is a poem known as "Teresa's Bookmark" that was found in her own prayer book after her death:

*Let nothing disturb you.*

*Let nothing upset you.*

*Everything changes.*

*God alone is unchanging.*

*With patience all things are possible.*

*Whoever has God lacks nothing.*

*God alone is enough.*

I hope Teresa's words will bring you some comfort in this challenging time. Simple and powerful! I also find Psalm 46 especially encouraging:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult... 'Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.' The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

The Lord bless us and keep us, the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us, the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us peace. Amen!  
Stay well and be safe!

## How Do I Pray?

*AFP Treasurer Libi Clifford*

For me, prayer is a conversation with God. I have no trouble with my part in the conversation but patiently listening to hear God's part of the conversation was never easy for me. Without a tool to help me focus, my mind can wander to my grocery list, bills to pay and a myriad of other subjects. A number of years ago I found something that would help me centre my thoughts completely by accident...

In 2011, I first walked a labyrinth. It was part of an Education for Ministry field trip. When I finished and reflected on the walk I realized that the world had seemed to recede as I moved toward the centre. I had slowed my pace physically and mentally as well. My thoughts became more focused as my eyes stayed lowered to concentrate on following the path. My world became smaller, the distractions disappeared and I was able to hear God. I had found a path to prayer that worked for me.

Finding a prayer method was only the first step. The immediate problem, of course, was having a labyrinth of a size reasonable to use. I didn't have a big yard and many I found online seemed too small.

My career was in window coverings, first as a seamstress and later in design so it was logical (at least to me) to design and make my own labyrinth in fabric. The finished labyrinth is based on a 14<sup>th</sup> century design and is about 50 cm square. It is small enough to sit on my ottoman where I can access it easily. I can follow the path using a finger or just with my eyes. It allows me to focus on listening for God to speak to me without getting distracted by the world around me or my wandering thoughts. It has also provided an unforeseen benefit. After my husband's death, I developed insomnia but by visualizing the labyrinth I can now go back to sleep fairly easily.

Everyone has different preferences for method and style of prayer. It's a matter of trying until finding what works for you. For me, it is the labyrinth.



*Hello! From the AFP Executive Zoom meeting earlier this month.*

# Praying Through the Pandemic and Life

Deborah Lonergan-Freake

In some ways I have found the Pandemic self-isolation challenging and difficult. In other ways, it has been a blessed time.

I remind myself of the wisdom of favourite spiritual guides: C. S. Lewis, Julian of Norwich and St. Ignatius Loyola. I find strength in Lewis' statement: "In our adversity, God shouts to us." Oh, how true! And how grateful I am that I can stop and listen for God shouting at me when I feel overwhelmed by unfamiliar technology which I am suddenly needing to learn and use to provide Services to the people of my Parish. At other times, Julian of Norwich's wisdom reminds me that we will get through this strange and somewhat frightening time. As I try to provide pastoral care by telephone or email, her words run through my mind: "And all shall be well. And all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be exceeding well."

My prayer life sustains me at all times and continues to do so now. As I begin each day, I pray. Quite often I use a prayer written by Jesuit Father John Veltri, from whom I learned so much about prayer.

*O God, I find myself at the beginning of another day, I do not know what it will bring,*

*Please help me to be ready for whatever it may be.*

*If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.*

*If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.*

*If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.*

*If I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly.*

*I pray just for today, for these twenty-four hours, for the ability to cooperate with others according to the way Jesus taught us to live.*

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

*May these words that he taught us become more than words.*

*Please free my thinking and feelings and the thinking and feelings of others, from all forms of self-will, self-centredness, dishonesty, and deception.*

*Along with my brothers and sisters, I need this freedom to make my choices today according to your desires.*

*Send your Spirit to inspire us in time of doubt and indecision so that, together, we can walk along your path. Amen.*

For many years I have ended my day with the Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practised. It is simple and easy. I share the Examen as I learned and adapted it from Fr. John Govan, sj.

I consciously put myself into the presence of Jesus. I ask Him to be with me as I walk back through my day. I talk to Jesus about what was good. I acknowledge that I had let Jesus be active in me and through me at those times. I ask Jesus to help me to know how to handle what was disturbing. I want Him to help me know myself with honesty and without being judgmental. Then I look at my truth in his presence and seek His guidance. I thank Him for having been with me in both my good times and my disturbing times throughout the day. I thank Jesus for today. I ask His help as I look to tomorrow with hope. I ask His help especially in that area of my life in which I most often experience weakness. I leave my day with Jesus and I am at peace.

I wish you peace, gratitude, and the ability and time to connect and commune with God.





## Prayer Resources

Our website has a special section for Pandemic-related prayers.

Please visit <http://www.anglicanprayer.org> to find these, and many other prayer resources.

*God of hope and love, as our world seems more and more chaotic in this time of Pandemic, help us open our hearts and minds to your peace. Sometimes, Lord Jesus, when we are alone, bombarded by news and statistics, we may feel lonely, scared, apprehensive and afraid that nothing will ever be the same again. In those moments, be with us so that we feel your love surrounding us and help us to remember that you will never leave us. Give us the strength to reach out to other people to share our feelings and fears and to listen to theirs so that together we may find calm in knowing that we are your people and you gift us with all we need, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day. In all things and no matter how we feel, give us the knowledge and wisdom to always give thanks to you that the gift of gratitude may help us return to you and overcome the fear that threatens us. Bless us God, who is Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Father of all,  
you call us to be  
generous to one  
another,  
and to recognise in their  
faces the true image of  
your Son.  
Give us grace that as  
individuals,  
and as a whole society,  
that in this time of great  
need we may minister  
friendship and support  
in ways that are safe  
to all those who are in  
need of the service of  
others this day,  
through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. Amen.*

Holy One;

We come before you today, knowing that you are with us.

In this time of persistent change and unknowing,  
we crave your ever-present grace.

In this space of many questions and few answers,  
we are desperate for your truth.

In this storm of confusion and uncertainty,  
we desire your constancy of love.

Speak peace to the fears we name in our hearts and minds.

Calm the inner and unspoken anxieties we carry.

Soothe our wearied and worried souls from the incessant angst.

For those whose bodies bear illness, we pray.

For those whose minds are trapped in fear, we pray.

For those whose spirits are devastated by isolation, we pray.

Helps us remember that you are with us,

for you alone give us strength and wholeness of being.

In your holy name we pray; Amen.