

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

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Lent 2020

Serving, Supporting, and Encouraging Prayer

No Turning Back

National Director Paul Feheley

In mid-January, my parish of St Michael's and All Angels (Toronto) sang 'I have decided to follow Jesus.' Here are the words (without repeats):

- 1) I have decided to follow Jesus... no turning back.
- 2) Though I may wonder, I still will follow..., no turning back.
- 3) The world behind me, the cross before me... no turning back.
- 4) Though none go with me, still I will follow... no turning back.
- 5) Will you decide now to follow Jesus?... no turning back.

It is a lively, evangelistic hymn which people love to sing but it takes on a whole different meaning when you read the story about the hymn.

Wikipedia indicates that originating in Assam, India, *"the lyrics are based on the last words of Nokseng, a Garo man ... who along with his family decided to follow Jesus Christ in the middle of the 19th century through the efforts of an American Baptist missionary. Called to renounce his faith by the village chief, the convert declared, "I have decided to follow Jesus." His two children were killed and in response to threats to his wife, he continued, "Though no one join me, still I will follow." His wife was killed, and he was executed while singing, "The world behind me, The Cross before me." This display of faith is reported to have led to the conversion of the chief and others in the village"*

In thinking about the season of Lent, we often focus on 'what I gave up' and at least occasionally think our 'sacrifices' are pretty important. Compare for a moment what we are doing versus what Nokeseng did in deciding to follow Jesus.

I am not against us giving something up for Lent, but I think it is critical to see Lent as a journey with our Saviour where the emphasis is less on me and more on deciding to follow Jesus step by step. Our journey will take us from the temptations in the desert through Palm Sunday, walking the way of the Cross and standing with Mary as she observes her son and our Lord and then placing him in the tomb. To follow Jesus is not for the indifferent or the apathetic; it is for those who are open to see, feel, touch and be moved by walking with Christ - regardless of where you are on your journey.

May this season be one where in prayer, study, and conversation we learn to follow Jesus together.



Current Work of the AFP Executive

Val Kenyon, National Chair



KEEPING A HOLY LENT

Central to the core mandate of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada), is a commitment to support both individuals and parishes in the discipline of prayer. Therefore, as noted in earlier months the development and promotion of resources of all kinds is key to the ongoing work of the national executive. As we find ourselves at the beginning of the season of Lent, invited in our Ash Wednesday liturgy to observe a holy Lent by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the word of God, you may wish to review ***Keeping a Holy Lent***, at

http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Keeping%20a%20Holy%20Lent_Sep_2017.pdf

This resource was created to explore this invitation and how we might give it expression in our particular contexts on our Lenten Journey.

Lent, far from being a forty-day endurance test, or a bleak and restricted time, this season is meant instead to be a transformative season. It is a time of rediscovery, a golden chance to open ourselves more deeply to the beauty and power of the dying and rising to new life in Jesus. It is a time to ponder the reality of the death and resurrection of Christ and in different ways to allow this reality to soak into our deepest parts.

As we give ourselves to the keeping of a holy Lent, we take some moments each day to find a quiet place, to perhaps light a candle and read a portion of Scripture (a reading for each day has been set out in *Keeping A Holy Lent* brochure or in a variety of other Lenten materials), to read a book about God, keep a thankfulness journal, or spend some time listening to God, rather than speaking. The topic of fasting can be addressed both literally by abstaining from certain foods or, depending upon our circumstances, by fasting from different attitudes or actions while we also consider how we might share with others from all that we have received. In all of this during the Lenten season, we are intentionally making room in our lives to become more keenly aware of God's Spirit working all around us, and how we might join in to and be led by that Spirit to participate in the work.

So please do visit the address above and print off a copy of the *Keeping a Holy Lent* resource. Share it in your parish; share it with a friend. If you would like a print copy and are not able to access it online, please do not hesitate to be in touch with us so a copy can be sent out to you.

**KEEPING A
HOLY
LENT**



"Lent is a time for discipline, for confession, for honesty; not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing, but because [God] wants us to know the joy of being cleaned out, ready for all the good things [God] now has in store."

~N.T. Wright

Praying a New Dream

Deborah Lonergan-Freake

I expect from time to time we all find ourselves in situations where change is required. Most of us don't like change very much; whether that change is in our day to day life, in our church or in our mirror. Change comes to all of us. We can be prepared or like the line from the children's game, Hide and Seek, we will find change calling out to us - 'Ready or Not, Here I Come'. In the opening lines of Dante's Divine Comedy there's a passage which reads: "In the middle of our life's road, I found myself in a dark wood, the straight way ahead lost."

The darkness of faith has been described as living between dreams. As we make our way through the highs and lows of this life, there are times when we lose our 'straightway ahead' and need to re-focus - dream another dream. We are all part of the cycle of life: from the moment that we are born, or even before, until the time of our death. There is a rhythm of life: light and darkness, winter and summer, comings and goings, seasons and cycles, ebbs and flows. Life continues in its patterns. We can embrace it, look forward to its newness each day or stubbornly try to hold onto the present, which tomorrow, will be the past.

In the course of life and faith, we are often converted not by sermons but by circumstances. God can always use our circumstances to move us along in our journey with God and to God. Only God can lead us into a new dream that is God's dream for us. One of the hardest parts of the journey toward a new dream is realizing that we have to give up the need to control where we are going, stop looking back, and let God lead and guide us. God invites us to listen for that guidance with the ears of the heart, the ears of faith.

Soon we will enter once again into the Lenten Journey which is a time of self examination, prayer and hopefully growth. Taking time each day to spend with God in prayer and reflection is vital to deepening our relationship with God. Lent is an excellent time to ask God what God's dream is for us, to let go of what is past and seek a new dream - God's dream. May we feel the warmth of God's love nurturing and encouraging our emerging dream, helping it grow; just as the sun draws tiny sprouts to poke their heads through the earth. May we embrace with joy and enthusiasm all that is before us.

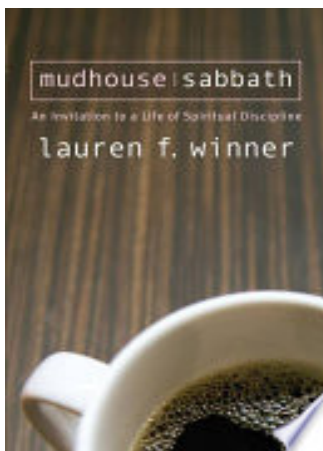
Book Review

Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Life of Spiritual Discipline

By Lauren F. Winner

reviewed by the Rev Jean King:

a 'somewhat' retired Methodist minister in Oxford England



Lauren Winner has written a gem of a book which will speak to all who are seeking to deepen or broaden their spiritual life- whatever your faith.

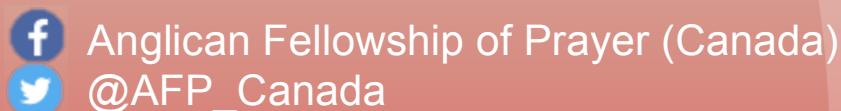
Converted from Judaism to Christianity she observes and describes with loving wisdom, the spiritual ceremonies, practices and disciplines of her erstwhile faith.

With her own longing and generosity, she offers the reader an understanding of many of those practices and gently suggests ways in which we might incorporate them into our lives.

It is a contemporary example of soul speaking to soul combining simplicity of language with depth of insight.

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Next Newsletter: Easter 2020
Submission deadline: March 16, 2020



Creative Lenten Suggestion

Paul Dumbrille

Lent is traditionally a time of Prayer, Almsgiving and Fasting. The parish of which I am a member has carried out the following suggestion on several occasions to encourage every member of the congregation to make Lent a special time of prayer, as well as to build Christian community within the parish.

During the week of the first Sunday of Lent each person, including children, who enters the worship space for a worship service is asked to legibly print or write their name on a small slip of paper and place it in a basket. Depending on the layout of worship space this may require some volunteers to greet each person as they enter. The basket with the names in it is brought forward at the Offering and prayed over at the altar. At the completion of the service, as each person leaves, or at some other time in the service, each person, including the children, takes, or is given, one of the slips of paper with a name on it. If the name on the slip is their own it is returned to the basket replaced with another one.

Every person with a slip of paper with a name on it is asked to pray each day during Lent for the person whose name they have drawn. Additionally, they are encouraged to contact the person for whom they are praying and let them know that they are being prayed for. If they don't know who the person is, they are asked to try to identify and meet the person and tell them that they are being prayed for.

This suggestion encourages people to make Lent a time of prayer, as well as help build a sense of Christian community within the parish.