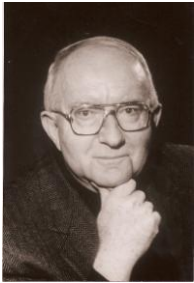


# Anglican Fellowship OF **PRAAYER** Canada



AFP-C NEWSLETTER - Vol. 18, No. 3

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2010



**ISLAND OF PRAYER  
ISLAND OF BLESSINGS  
HERBERT O'DRISCOLL**

It doesn't matter how often you have been here. You always want to come back to Iona one more time. One more time to come up the last slope of the winding road across Mull, roll into the tiny village of Fionnphort and see across the channel the long low outline of Iona, the village along the shoreline, the Abbey beyond. Of course when you've been given the gift of seeing it one more time, as I was a few months ago, you find as you're leaving, walking down the slip to the ferry that you still want to come back one more time!

Why? Because it's lovely and peaceful and quiet and simple? Yes, but that's not all. There is more. The "more" is simply this. After 1500 years of peace and turmoil, even times of being under fierce attack, in spite of the world changing all around it; in spite of day trippers coming and going on the ferry; in spite of everything Iona has remained a place of prayer.



Mull and Iona

**Editor's note:** The tiny island of Iona lies off the south west coast of the Isle of Mull, on Scotland's west coast. Iona itself is only 3.5 miles long by approximately 1.5 miles at its widest point.

That doesn't mean that everyone is going around praying. People come and go with their varied lives, whether it's running one of the few shops on the island, driving the single taxi, running a daily boat trip to Staffa or a ferry over to Mull or staffing the two small friendly hotels. Others are strolling around, others exploring the Abbey or the shop of the Iona Community or organizing a pilgrimage to Columba's Bay at the south end of the island. All of this goes on perfectly

- continued on page 2 -



**MESSAGE FROM OUR  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR**

**THE RT. REV. GARY WOOLSEY**

"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

Psalm 27:4

This past September my wife, Marie, and I rode our motorcycles south from Calgary through Montana, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, northern California, Oregon, and Washington. I am in awe at the beauty of God's creation! Our pictures do not do justice to the scenery at Zion and Bryce National Parks, the Nevada desert, the Redwoods of California, the spectacular coastline of Oregon, or the Craters of the Moon lava beds in Idaho. Yet there is the saying: 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.'

I am aware that one person can look at an aspect of God's creation and see beauty but another can look at the same sight and say, 'What a God-forsaken land!'. As we rode across the desert in Nevada, I kept marveling at the vastness, the distant hills, the odd head of cattle and a few wild horses, as well as a huge spider! And then seeing a few homes gathered around some trees, an oasis in the desert, miles from anywhere. Lord, what would life be like from day to day in the middle of the desert? Then I recalled my own existence living in remote, isolated aboriginal villages with no road for hundreds of miles. Did we feel alone and isolated from life? From God? No, because our 'eyes' saw the beauty of the people and the place in which we lived and just maybe, that was because our inner eyes had experienced the 'beauty of the Lord of creation'.

When we stopped with our motorcycle group in the desert, one person said how she hated to ride across the desert because it was so 'boring' - long straight stretches of road with nothing to see. I also recalled the time when we lived in Churchill, Manitoba, on the shore of Hudson Bay. The beauty of the water, observing seals, beluga whales, water fowl, Arctic fox, and of course, the magnificent Polar Bear kept me

- continued on page 2 -

**ISLAND OF PRAYER  
ISLAND OF BLESSINGS**  
- Continued from page 1-

normally – and yet - and yet you have a peculiar sense that there is something more here. One aspect of that “more” is that for 15 centuries people have come here to pray, to work together, and in many different ways to seek the foundations of their faith in Jesus Christ or, as it is with us all sometimes, to search for faith in Jesus.

And so it is that in recent years when I think of Iona, and each time when I see it, and all the times I remember it when I am far away from it, I remember the sound of its prayers.

One prayer is very short. It occurs in the Abbey’s worship life and is said very often. Maybe because it’s so short I find it hits home every time I hear it. It’s a response of the congregation...

*We will not offer to God  
Offerings that cost us nothing.*

There it is – a promise made to God - blunt, plain, challenging. In Iona’s worship life a spade is called a spade!

Scattered throughout the worship services of the Abbey are blessings that are breathtakingly beautiful yet so very simple. The beauty and simplicity are achieved by the use of vivid images...

*May God’s goodness be yours,  
And well, and seven times well, may you spend your lives:  
May you be an isle in the sea,  
May you be a hill on the shore,  
May you be a star in the darkness,  
May you be a staff to the weak;  
May the love Christ Jesus gave fill every heart for you;  
May the love Christ Jesus gave fill you for every one.*

The spirit of a giant roams this island, a spiritual giant. Columba and his companions came here in 563 A.D. and founded their community. Columba was an extraordinary versatile man, warrior, poet, diplomat, peacemaker, pastorally caring. There is a blessing of his that has come down the centuries. It speaks to me deeply and I often use it in public worship or at a conference and it never fails to draw and move those who hear it. Always as I board the ferry and bid farewell to Iona – yes, and ask God that there may be one more time to return – I share Columba’s blessing with those who have come here with me.

*Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you.  
Deep peace of the running wave to you.  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.  
Deep Peace of the Son of Peace to you.  
Deep Peace... Deep Peace.*

I knew when I began this that I would run out of space! Perhaps in the next issue I can invite you back again to Iona to share the beauty of its worship, its prayers and its blessings.

**MESSAGE FROM OUR  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR**  
**THE RT. REV. GARY WOOLSEY**

-continued from page 1-

always thankful for the opportunity of ministering with people in this remote community. Yet I recall a tourist saying to me, 'How can you live in such a 'bleak' place? Hardly any trees and nothing but miles of grey, smooth rock!' Lord, does the heart need to be changed in order 'to gaze upon the beauty' that surrounds us - wherever we are?

We are approaching another Advent and Christmas season. There can be many distractions that take us away from seeing the beauty of God's gift of life in our Saviour, Jesus. I am reminded of those words in Hebrews 12:2 - "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ..." I pray that we will be able to show others that we have seen the beauty of the Lord.

Peace

+Gary

Bishop Gary Woolsey

AFP-Canada National Director

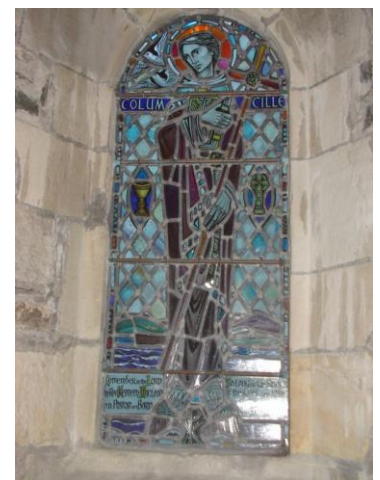
**Pictures from Iona**



The Abbey from a field leading to the sea.



A Celtic cross in front of the Abbey



Stained glass of St. Columba in the Abbey

**Save The Date!***A Conference titled***"Transformation of the Heart"***is planned for***June 7 to 10, 2011,***at***Entheos Retreat Centre,  
just west of Calgary AB.****The Primate****The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz  
will be in attendance**

Diocesan Representatives, Parish Representatives, and others interested in supporting the work of AFP are invited to attend.

This is an opportunity to become more confident in providing prayer leadership in your own ministry. You will become more familiar with AFP resources, and share creative ideas to support one another and enrich the spirituality of the church.

Spring in the Rockies is a time of the awakening of nature, and an opportunity to seek that awakening within ourselves.

A letter with more information will be sent shortly to all the DR's and Diocesan Bishops.

**Praying Congregations:***The Heart of***Christian Community****Friday, May 13 and Saturday, May 14, 2011****University of Guelph – Kemptville Campus****Co-sponsored by the****Dioceses of Ontario and Ottawa****Keynote Speaker: Jane E. Vennard**

The Reverend Jane Vennard is a dynamic United Church of Christ teacher, spiritual director, retreat leader, and author of numerous articles and books on Christian spirituality. She is the former Louise Warren Iliff Senior adjunct faculty member in prayer and spirituality at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado and a graduate of Wellesley College (B.A.), Stanford University (M.A.) and San Francisco Theological Seminary (M.Div.). She has a passion for nurturing people's love for God in Christ and helping them develop a vibrant prayer life that responds to the needs of our post-modern world.

For more information, please contact either:

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**Advent Prayer**

Paul Dumbrille

*Loving and gracious God, you show us the tenderness of Your love in Your newborn Son.**Like Mary, may we always be attentive to your Spirit, and ready to say "yes" to your will, so that Jesus may be born anew in us.**Like Joseph may we always be aware of your presence in our lives and the needs of others.**Like the Shepherds may we be alert and looking forward in joyful anticipation of what is to come.**Like the kind innkeeper may we be awake to serve you and others when the opportunities present themselves.**We ask you to prepare us to welcome Jesus into our hearts, so that like the angels who announced his birth, we too might greet his coming.**Amen***Advent Reflection**

Paul Dumbrille

**Reading: Mark 13:35-36**

- "Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

**Reflection**

- God, our Creator, makes a world full of wonderful things that are available to us, but we are sometimes too busy to notice them. Jesus tells us to be awake and on the lookout for the positive signs of God's creation, and the goodness in the people around us that makes our lives better.

**Activities**

- Find the time either to wake up early to watch the sunrise or to watch the sunset. Reflect on how it makes you feel?
- Open your eyes wide look around you and share with others what the small things are that make life good for you or others.



## ***New Diocesan Representative for Nova Scotia/Prince Edward Island***



*The Reverend Stephen Laskey*

Steve grew up in Montreal and after a few years in the navy as a submariner, he began studies at St. John's College in Winnipeg. He has been a priest for 21 years with a number of years spent in Labrador and St. John's in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and

Labrador. While there he was the Diocesan rep for AFP from about 1997 to 2001. In 2001, two years after a trip to a diocese in the Church of North India, he decided to take a one year sabbatical to study prayer life in other cultures in the Anglican Communion but the events of 9/11 changed the direction dramatically and he ended up in Central London, UK for a 3 month locum position. This stretched out to 8 years mostly spent in south London. In November 2009, his wife, Jos, and he returned to Canada to the diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI to take up the position of Rector of the parish of Christ Church, Dartmouth. Together, they have three children and two grandchildren. After just a year back in Canada they are beginning to settle in again. Steve is looking forward to helping promote regular prayer in people's daily life and in the parishes and congregations in the diocese as well as promoting the overall aims of the AFP. He has a great enjoyment of running and cycling in his spare time.

## ***Lettuce Pray!***

*Bernadette Njegovan*



This past spring our son was heading up the "Wheat Team" for a Teens Encounter Christ weekend in our diocese. To prepare, he pulled out a shoebox that was full of "wheat" he had received working on teams over the years. It was still being held in storage in our basement. It was quite heavy! He shared with me these prayer stones he had received from a friend. Here is a picture. I think the prayer stones could have numerous possibilities when encouraging both children & youth to pray, as well as ourselves.

Just to make sure you know what each stone says: (It is the ACTS model transformed! Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. )



*Praise God!*

*Forgive Me For....*

*Thank You For...*

*Personal + Global Needs*

## ***A Book Review***

*by AFP Chairperson  
Esther Jackson*



Book: *The Naked Now* by **Richard Rohr**

Connect to the joy already within you, and allow yourself to experience the desire for God.

Rhor says "God is done unto us" and all we can do is allow it to happen. We are being utterly and warmly held. Rather than finding anything it feels much more like Someone has found you. We pray through Christ, or more precisely Christ prays through us. We are always the conduits, the receiver stations. Romans 8: 22-27. We slowly learn to pick up the signal. The name of God was considered unspeakable for Jews. Formally, the name Yahweh was breathed. We breathe the air of the earth. This Divine Wind blows where it will, everywhere. God is suddenly as available as what we do naturally, breathe. Reflect, "breath, wind, spirit, air are precisely nothing, and yet everything". So in breathing we are connected to all of creation.

This way of knowing God, and breath prayer is at the essence of The Naked Now

Each stone gives help words to guide us on our prayer walk.

I would suggest, for Sunday School, have the stones turned over on a worship table, (add a votive candle contained in glass, a cross and a Bible, a cloth covered TV table works well).

Each week during opening prayer, a child could turn over one stone. Explain the phrase a little to make certain the children understand its meaning. Have the children give verbal contributions or give time for quiet prayer. Over the year, the children will have opportunity then, to have been introduced to all 4 facets of prayer a few times over!

For youth or yourself and other persons in your community. Make a set and place them in a little Ziploc or cloth bag. During personal prayer time each stone can be held one at a time to assist in focusing on that specific facet of prayer. Better still; have them on a worship table in your home.

Of course in everything let us always remember that prayer is simply talking with God.

With Thought and Prayer For Prayer-Filled Children Around Our World!

## Toronto Diocesan Prayer Conference God Yearning to Hear Oct. 22 & 23, 2010

Fabulous! Absolutely wonderful! The best! Those were some of the comments from a few of the 175 people from across Canada and the diocese who attended this year's Prayer Conference held at St. John's Anglican Church York Mills. The theme speaker was The Reverend Mike Flynn, a retired Episcopal Priest from California who formed a Christian ministry called 'Fresh Wind'. Through his theme, God Yearning to Hear, Mike led us into a rich experience of God's power and presence. He did this by reminding us that God has no special children and that we can all have power in prayer if we are willing to p(r)ay the price. In his three addresses, Mike encouraged the participants to think about prayer as a 'relationship' with God and that in any relationship one must be willing to be open to listen to God and then to act. His comment on reading the Scriptures struck a deep note: "to fully comprehend the text, you must do it! Just do it!" He led us to look at Jesus and his relationships and then how we as leaders need to look at how we can be instrumental in encouraging others to minister and not be the 'bottle neck' in preventing others from sharing their gifts. But there is also an aspect of 'vulnerability' when we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit and we must allow ourselves to move forward in order to release the power of God in our lives as intercessors. At the end of each of his talks, Mike had such a unique way of praying over the entire congregation that he made his prayer seem very personal and intimate.

Fourteen workshops were conducted on Saturday morning and afternoon. These included such topics as: Forgiveness and Reconciliation, When Stress Attacks, How do I begin to pray with others?, Depression and Prayer, and Prayer from the Heart. The gifts of leadership were so evident in all those that offered their talents to help the participants grow in prayer and faith. The conference was upheld in prayer by people who came to the prayer chapel and many praying in their homes.

Wonderful, uplifting music was led by Trinity Church Streetsville music team. This too ushered us into the presence of God as we made a joyful noise unto the Lord.

A special presentation was made by Tony Day, Chair of the Diocese of Toronto Prayer Committee and a member of the AFP National Executive, to Betty Gracie for her many years of service with the Prayer Committee and Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. Following the final worship time, an opportunity was given for individuals to be prayed for and anointed.

There's only one way to conclude and that is to say that it was the Lord's doing and it was marvelous to behold!



Members of the National Executive at the Toronto Conference assisting at the AFP table  
L. to R.: Cathy Reynolds, Secretary; Esther Jackson, Chairperson, Paul Dumbrille, Rev. Canon Anne Moore, Tony Day, and Rt. Rev. Gary Woolsey



Left: Cathy Reynolds, Secretary of AFP National Executive at the AFP table in Toronto

***Before you pray, seek the face of the Lord and find out what He wants you to pray about; that is what Jesus is doing. That is what Jesus did. You will recall that He said I do nothing. I only do what I see my father doing.***

***Pray for each other... the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16 NIV  
Father, create within us a willing spirit to move when you nudge us to pray. May we count it as a joy and privilege.  
Amen. (Eva Marie Emerson)***



facebook



twitter

*AFP wants to reach out to as many people as possible to encourage prayer. It is no secret that more and more people are communicating via what are called "Social Media" such as Facebook and Twitter. At a recent AFP (Canada) Executive meeting, we agreed to investigate and see if there are ways in which we can make use of the Social Media to help us with our mission. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact your Diocesan Representative, any member of the Executive, or Paul Dumbrille, our Resource Coordinator (paul.dumbrille@sympatico.ca) with your ideas.*

## Using the Internet to Encourage Prayer:

### Online Retreat on Intercessory Prayer

Paul Dumbrille



I came across a new-to-me approach to encouraging prayer offered by a multi-faith website called [Spirituality & Practice](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com) ([www.spiritualityandpractice.com](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com)). It has offered more than 30 e-courses and online retreats since the website was launched in 2006. The [series on classic practices of the world's religions](#) has covered Lectio Divina (praying with scripture), Praying the Hours (based on the monastic tradition of marking specific times of day with prayer), Forgiveness, and the Buddhist practice of Lovingkindness meditation. Participants report that one of the most powerful elements of the experience has been the Practice Circle, where people from around the world quickly develop into a spiritual community offering each other support on their journeys.

One example is a course on the Christian Intercessory Prayer that was recently offered. To create an [Intercessory Prayer](#) retreat the organizers turned to the Rev. Jane E. Vennard, author of several of their favorite books on prayer, including *Praying for Friends and Enemies*, *Praying with Body and Soul*, and *Embracing the World: Praying for Justice and Peace*. She is a United Church of Christ minister who has a ministry of spiritual direction and leading retreats and prayer conferences.

"In many of our traditions we pray together in community and are invited to pray in solitude, but we rarely talk about prayer," Vennard observed as she discussed her preparation for an online course. "Many of us have questions, concerns, and doubts about intercessory prayer — how it works, if it works — and we need a place for dialogue. People also have had profound experiences in prayer they are longing to share." During the course she addressed key questions and concerns about intercessory prayer in email lessons and during two one-hour teleconferences. Dialogue took place in a private online "Practice Circle" set up at [SpiritualityandPractice.com](http://SpiritualityandPractice.com) especially for this retreat.



Betty Gracie

## Betty Gracie

After thirty years with the prayer committee in Toronto, Betty Gracie has retired. As many of you know she has been a tireless worker for Jesus in a ministry of prayer. She will be missed.

One of her major gifts is that of recruiting folk! Betty and Tom, her husband, travelled to many places throughout Canada leading prayer workshops so many of you will have met them.

Although she has resigned she told us that in the future she will spend her ministry time assisting the leadership run prayer events in the diocesan area of Trent Durham. We say well done you good and faithful servant, that of course includes Tom; they were a team.

## Huron Diocesan Prayer Conference

### THE POTTER'S HAND

Saturday, October 23, 2010

Submitted by Bev Timpson



Storytelling was the theme this year. Over 60 participants attended the conference held at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario. They learned the amazing power in telling the scriptures instead of reading them. Rev. Mary Bell-Plouffe, an Anglican minister in Peterborough, brought the stories to life by telling them with expression and a few props, drawing us into them in a personal way. The title of the conference does include the word prayer and the storytelling in which we engaged opened the scripture to being prayer in the oral tradition of our biblical forebears. It stretched our comfort zones, challenged our perceptions of scripture as prayer, and opened our hearts and minds to the power of the words of scripture when proclaimed in a dynamic new way.

In the afternoon, participants worked with their own piece of clay during a time of mediation on Jeremiah 18:1-6, about the Potter and the clay. Again this opened our creative beings to express our sense of being the clay in the potter's hand and what our image of the love and presence of God is in our lives. This opportunity to create with clay engaged us in another form of meditation and prayer. Cary Landry's timeless song "Abba Father" was an important element of drawing us into the story and into music as prayer.

A few of the comments on the evaluations were:

"The stories being told were faith inspiring."

"I am thankful for the opportunity to come together to meet old friends and new friends."

"I especially enjoyed the talk about Jeremiah as I have just finished reading the Book of Jeremiah last week. I will go home and read it again and I am sure I will see it in a different light."

"I have been encouraged to tell Bible stories in a new way, and to incorporate Biblical storytelling in church."

"The spiritual values are what bring us here and we take away more than we could ever ask for."

Rev. Jane Fletcher completes her term as A.F.P. Diocesan Rep. for Huron in Dec. 2010. The committee working with her would like to extend heartfelt thanks for her creativity, leadership and sense of humour. During her term we produced an A.F.P. quilt, with the squares created by many parishes throughout the Diocese of Huron. The quilt was displayed for the first time at the conference and is a reminder that our lives are stitched together in prayer. The quilt will be dedicated at Synod 2011.



## Mission in a Time of 'Itchy' Ears

The Rev. Diane Guilford

The second letter of Timothy ends with the challenge to the early Christians 'to proclaim the message, be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having *itching* ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.'

South Korea has developed a thirst for the Christian faith. It has the fastest growing Christian population anywhere in the world. People are *itching* to hear more about the Bible and the teaching of Christ.

When I was asked to lead a mission in the city of Kwangyang in the southern region of South Korea I was both excited and terrified. Do I have the skill to bring 'sound doctrine' to a people with 'itching ears'? To add to this, I come with a very negative attitude about 'mission', and struggle constantly with walking the line of being faithful to Jesus' commission of 'evangelism', and crossing the line into conversion. I come from a theology that Christianity is only one of the ways that we come to God, and I pray regularly for people of all faiths. Will I be expected to convert people of the Buddhist faith within the context of 'mission' and 'evangelism' in Korea? Are the people in S. Korea really 'itching' for evangelists?

I have many friends from my time in the Diocese of Keewatin, whose ancestors were victims of the 'mission' of the early Christians who ridiculed them for their spirituality and expression. The missionaries were perhaps using the above quote from Timothy to support their mission. They partnered with the Canadian government and supported residential schools that my friends attended. There was only one way and one language to worship God. I acknowledge that many good things happened through the mission at this time and if I were around at the time, would probably support it. But I now sit at alternative dispute resolution meetings, representing the Anglican Church, to hear the victims name their pain and suffering that we caused under the banner of 'mission'.

When the S Korean invitation came to me I was very involved in a conversation about mission as we prepared for the Diocesan Faith Horizons. Our speaker, Alan Roxburgh, challenged us to look outside the church to see what mission was already happening in our communities and how our faith communities could become part of something that was already happening. The assumption is that God is already doing some powerful things in our wider community, and we as a church, need to look for God in people and activities outside our walls and consider joining forces.

When I was in seminary in Saskatoon I had the privilege of doing my internship in the Diocese of Central Buganda in Uganda, under the supervision of the Ven. Godfrey Maweje. I had become friends with Maweje when he first came to Canada and began his theology degree at St. John's College, where I was the registrar. I too was taking courses so got to know him well. Patrick and Mary Lee had come to know and appreciate Maweje's enthusiasm for his faith while they were serving as missionaries in Uganda and knew that Maweje and his wife, Agnes, had much to offer the Christian Church in Canada. I remember celebrating Bishop Patrick's vision of inviting Maweje to come to Rupert's Land to be a missionary to us.

While in Uganda, I was sad to see that the Christian missionaries had done the same style of evangelism in Uganda, as they did in Canada – there is only 'one way' to worship God – the British way. It was only in 1993 that drums had been allowed back in the Anglican Churches in Uganda. Most worship I attended was very 'British' and the true Ugandan spirit was mostly felt in the celebrations and feasts and dancing after the worship. The exception was worship at the Teacher's College where Maweje was the pastor and had many youth playing drums and leading local Christian songs that lifted the roof!

Where does South Korea fit into this conversation on mission? In May, 2009, St. Stephen's Church was hosting their annual basement sale. One of the members brought two Korean people who were wanting to talk to the pastor. This was Pastor Yun and Jennifer Choi who were wanting to begin a faith community in Winnipeg. Pastor Yun is the head pastor of Kwangyang Southern Baptist Church in S. Korea and received a call from God to do a mission in Canada. He and Jennifer had been going from church to church in Winnipeg, looking for a place to worship – that was free. I was enthusiastic and after worship the next day had the approval of the vestry for this mission to take place at St. Stephen's at 3 pm Sunday afternoons. The Life Driving Church, which it came to be named, began worshipping the following Sunday and have been a blessing to our congregation. Pastor Yun and their music leader worship with us regularly at 10 am even though their English is limited, and I occasionally worship with them. Their services are in Korean and when I'm invited to preach, Jennifer translates for me. Jennifer has her own Immigration Company, facilitating Asian immigration to Canada, so speaks English very well and is the main leader when Pastor Yun does return visits home to Korea.

In the midst of my negative feelings about 'mission' and mixed feelings of 'evangelism' Pastor Yun invited me to come to his church in Korea and lead a mission. Initially I thought he was joking and laughed it off. Then he told me he would pay for all my expenses and also issued an open invitation to members of St. Stephen's to be part of this mission. They would pay their own way, but all expenses would be covered while in Kwangyang. Pastor Yun is very convincing and I agreed, as well as four members from St. Stephen's. We then embarked on some serious language training as well as training in being evangelists – sharing the Gospel to others.

Kwangyang Church was the result of the mission by the Southern Baptist Church in the United States about 20 years ago and Pastor Yun has been their pastor for 17 years. There is a Second Pastor who leads when he is away on his missions. They are very enthusiastic and committed to their faith. The members were told that there was a 'mission team' coming from Canada and they were invited to think of people in their circle of acquaintances (family, colleagues, neighbours) who might want to learn more about Christianity. They received these names and when we arrived they had a very long list of people that they wanted us to visit, mostly in their homes, and very often with several present. Very few people spoke English, so all of us had a translator with us.

I would be received with great hospitality and we would sit on the floor (usually on a cushion) and be offered food (usually fruit or veggies) and tea on a low table in the centre of the room. I would explain who I was and some of my own story and how much my Christian faith meant to me. I would then ask them if they would like to hear more about Christianity and consider becoming a Christian themselves.

Asian people are full of grace so they were always keen to hear more. After sharing more, I would use the book developed by the

Southern Baptist Church on becoming a Christian. Their language is not my language but the message of love and grace in the death and resurrection of God's son, Jesus Christ, was clear and true. We would end with a prayer and blessing. All of this took place in the midst of some of their stories and tears and often laughter and many smiles. The warmth and hospitality I felt in all those homes was astounding. At the end of the first day when we met for our evening meal in the restaurant, Pastor Yun asked me, "How many people accepted Christ today Diane?" I paused then said, "I can tell you how many people I shared the Gospel with today, but only God knows how many accepted Christ." After that first day I was never able to keep track of how many people I connected with. One day we went out into the country to the home of one of the deacons. She and her husband had gathered neighbours to meet us. We were all sitting on the floor in a large circle in the living room and they turned to me and said, "Diane would share the Gospel with us." It still causes me to cry as I felt the incredible privilege and honour to be in that circle – and those seekers accepted Christ that day. We then had a huge feast – all of us sitting on the floor at several low tables, using chop sticks. Between sitting on the floor and using chop sticks, my skirts always ended up pretty messy by the end of the day.

The Kwangyang Church gathers for worship at 5 am every day – even Sunday. (We didn't attend every day!) They have youth worship Saturday evening, Community worship Sunday morning in two locations, and Sunday evening worship in the main church. There is an expectation that in order for the leaders of the church to lead, they must be fully prepared – which means regular worship, regular Bible reading and prayer, and faithful service to the church and community. Many of them are ready and keen to go on missions, wherever Pastor Yun might request. They have been to several countries, and have older youth doing missions in China. Needless to say, I felt out of my depth and prayed even more fervently that God could use me in the midst of these committed Christians. They said that the advantage of having Canadians do mission is that people are more interested in their message and their stories. We were there for 9 days, 7 of them doing mission, and I preached 8 times. All the sermons had to be typed so that the translators could use the written English. We would get home after dinner about 9:30 and I'd go to my computer

and begin the sermon for the next worship, again desperately praying that God would give me the words to share His Word.

I'm now back in my Anglican Church in Canada still wondering about mission. We are lazy Christians. As true Canadians we don't take pride in the gift that we have as Christians. We are modest and are embarrassed about sharing this gift of faith with others. When we talk about wanting our churches to grow, it is more from the perspective of keeping the building open than wanting others to share in the Good News of Jesus Christ. We can read books, go to conferences, write papers and analyze mission and evangelism to the nth degree. We can do outreach 'projects' and put ourselves on the back for being 'out there'. We have been given a beautiful gift in our faith, and yet we are so very poor at sharing this gift with others.

Our culture lives in the midst of a milieu of options for nurturing our spirituality. I am grateful for the richness this gives us but also feel challenged to hold up the value and importance of the Christian Faith. Perhaps it is not unlike the culture of the early church when Timothy wrote his letter, "*For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.*" I believe that the Gospel has sound doctrine and we are called to share it. I believe we live in a time where people do have 'itching ears' and are searching for more meaning in their lives. How do we respond to a culture with 'itching ears'?

When was the last time you told someone about your faith in Jesus Christ? Have you ever told another person what you believe? I come back from this mission trip with a firm belief that we need to give people more opportunities to tell their faith story. If they aren't challenged to do this in our church, will it ever happen? When we are challenged to personalize our faith and acknowledge what God has done for us, then we can more easily share it with others.

My name is Diane Guilford and I am a Christian. Can I share some of my faith story with you? Are you interested in learning more about being a Christian?

Written March 4, 2010  
Diane K. Guilford

## A Christmas Day Prayer

By Arnold G. Kuntz

From his book

"PRAYERS FOR WORSHIP

*Prayers of the Church for Every Sunday*"

O Dayspring from on high, Babe of Bethlehem, we follow in the steps of those who knelt in humble adoration at your manger so many years ago.

Like shepherds of old, we thrill to the message that the herald angel brings: "A Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." We, too, go to see this thing that is come to pass. The glory shines around us as well. Our hearts grow warm before the meaning of the miracle. God is love, indeed, and there is hope for all who humbly open their lives to you. You have come to do for us what we are so helpless to do for ourselves. Empower us to fulfill in faithfulness the things that you have given us to do, so like ancient shepherds our daily walk may become for us a road of glory and a mission of peace.

As you did with Mary and Joseph, so make your home in human lives and hearts. As Joseph and Mary went up from Galilee to Judea, lead us wherever we may help to carry out your plan for humankind. As Mary brought into this world "a light to lighten Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel," so enable us, too, to bring your peace to desperate people.

May all who see our worship of the newborn Babe wonder at the way we keep this day. And here and there, O Bethlehem's royal Prince, let there be some who, because of us, ponder these things deep within their hearts.

We praise you now and evermore.  
Amen.

(Luke 2:1-20)

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