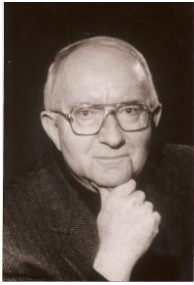


Anglican Fellowship OF **PRAAYER** Canada



AFP-C NEWSLETTER - Vol. 19, No. 1

LENTEN/EASTER 2011



THE MUSIC OF WHAT HAPPENS **HERBERT O'DRISCOLL**

I have a hunch that for many people the word prayer is what I would call a guilt button. Even saying it makes one feel a bit guilty. And the reason we feel guilty is that we feel we are way behind in the prayer sweepstakes. There is Saint

Cuthbert up to his chest in the chilly waters of the North Sea praying his way from sundown to dawn. There's good Saint Brigid at her well in unrelenting prayer. And there is Saint Patrick shivering on the slopes of Slemish Mountain praying, he tells us, a hundred times a day.

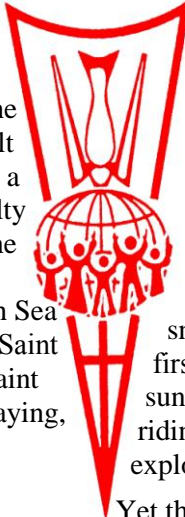
So – most of us ask, “Where am I in all this high stakes praying?” We feel defeated before we even start in this prayer competition. Most of us feel so far behind this kind of standard we think we're not even in the race!

Well, let's think about images of prayer like those I've mentioned. I suspect those images are woven from many different kinds of cloth. The affection of the long ago folk who knew these spiritual giants, followed by countless tellings of their sanctity told again and again down through time.

I don't say this to lessen the greatness of our saints. Merely to root them in reality, the kind of reality you and I have to live. I would bet that a lot of their prayer was done on the fly, just like us. Cuthbert had a monastery to run at a time when things were getting pretty rough and dangerous around the North Sea coast. Brigid, we know, was always out there visiting the sick and the poor, and Patrick had to go around most of the time watching his back from enemies. So, as I said, I suspect they did what we do – they prayed when life slowed down a bit to let them do so. All of which should lift some of your guilt and mine about our prayer life.

There is an old story told about Fionn MacCool, the great hero of ancient Ireland. He and his men – the Fianna – were hunting one day in the forests of the island. At evening they made camp, gathered around the fire and raised whatever served as a glass in those days. Fionn said, “A question – what is the greatest music of all?” Well, they gave various answers

-continued on page 2-



MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL DIRECTOR

THE RT. REV. GARY WOOLSEY

Dear Friends,

As I write this message I am conscious of the fact that if Marie and I were home in Calgary we would have been facing some serious winter snow conditions!! But instead we have been enjoying our first experience of being 'snow birds' for two months in sunny Arizona. In order to enjoy our hobby of motorcycle riding, we hauled our two bikes behind our van and we are exploring the southern Arizona scenery. Awesome!

Yet the world of technology today keeps us connected to family and friends so that our life of prayer is 'not put on hold' for the months that we are away from home in Calgary. Our netbook allows us to link to the internet to check our emails and Facebook messages. A dear friend of ours, Jocelyn, had a serious heart condition which required the doctors to 'stop her heart' and then restart it so that a normal rhythm could be achieved. She and her husband Bill sent out a message on Facebook and asked for prayers.

Many studies have been done to show that distance is no barrier to having prayers answered. In fact one author was bold enough to say that we should expect doctors to pray with us before surgery since it has been proven that prayer assists in the healing process. But there are times when I get lazy and forget about the power of prayer and my responsibility as a child of God to be one of God's instruments in the healing process. When I remain connected to the community of faith, then I can be encouraged to keep from slipping into 'laziness' in my life of prayer.

Jocelyn's husband, Bill, sent out a message on Facebook thanking everyone for their prayers. Jocelyn's heart was stopped and restarted. The normal rhythm has returned which brings back her energy level and regular activities as wife, mother, friend and operating room nurse.

“Lord, do not let me become complacent in my life of prayer. You have created us to be partners with you in the healing

-continued on page 2-

THE MUSIC OF WHAT HAPPENS

- Continued from page 1-

– the wind in the trees, the waves on the beach, the laughter of good friends, on and on. Each time Fionn shook his head. Someone said, “So, Fionn, tell us. What’s the greatest music of all?” And Fionn said quietly “The greatest music is the music of what happens”.

In other words life itself has music we need to listen to, and I think we can think about prayer in those terms. Prayer is what’s going on right now in my life. On Friday I go to the funeral of an old friend. I will give thanks for him. The wife of a colleague is quite ill. I lift her to God over the last few days. An old friend has just moved into hospice care. I email to thank him for a piece of advice he gave me many years ago, advice that helped me. About an hour ago I picked up a Grade 12 granddaughter from school. Brilliant mind – no, really! I’m not doing the grandfather thing! Highly motivated, she’s ready to take on the world. I give thanks for her. I have to prepare a homily for this Sunday. I ask direction. For that matter, when I sat down a little while ago at this computer to write a piece for our Fellowship of Prayer, I opened my mind to the Spirit and began to type. I can only hope that what the Spirit sent is a helpful word for you in your own busy life.

Think about it. You probably pray a great deal. Listen to the music of your prayer. It’s the music of what’s happening in your life.



An Easter Prayer

Glorious Risen Lord, we remember how they came up and took hold of your feet and worshipped you on that first Easter. Let us worship you with gladness on this new Easter, joined by the company of the Easter people. We worship you with the joy that we have met you in many places--in the house of prayer, in our homes, in our callings, and our inner being. Now may our worship turn into witness to tell the world that you are alive, and that you give new life to all who come to you; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

By +Donald Hultstrand

Retired Bishop of Springfield, Minnesota

(Taken from the AFP (US) web site)

**Behold God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid; for the
LORD GOD is my strength and my song.
Isaiah 12:2**

MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL DIRECTOR

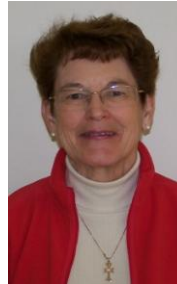
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process. Let each day be an opportunity in my life to bring to you those who need your love and peace.”

+Gary

AFP National Director (Canada)

**Thoughts from the AFP Executive Chair
Esther Jackson**



For a short winter break, I have recently been staying in the apartment of a cousin in Vancouver. She has a little thought for the day flip stand in the bathroom.

The thought for Friday, February 11, was, "Happiness is more a matter of attitude than circumstance." I was challenged to realize that we often are challenged by circumstances

beyond our control. Taking time to step back, and look for the positive, and find the grace in the moment, can offer a kind of healing, and an element of peace, sometimes humour,

In the evening the scripture I was reading was Paul's letter to James, who reminds James to "stir into flame the gift of God that is within you.....the spirit to inspire strength, love, and self-discipline". We have that resource, the gift of the Spirit, the strength and power of his Spirit in our inner being, that Christ may dwell in our hearts in love. It's not always easy, but the Spirit is always there to aid us in our weakness.

**Praying Congregations:
THE Heart OF
Christian Community**



**FRIDAY, MAY 13 AND
SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2011**
KEMPTVILLE CAMPUS – UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

KEYNOTE SPEAKER Jane E. Vennard

COST: \$75 per person, \$50 students
Group Discount Rate: \$300 for 5 people (\$60 per person)
Final deadline for group registrations: FRIDAY, APRIL 29
Final deadline for individual registrations: MONDAY, MAY 9

Register online at www.ottawa.anglican.ca or contact Neil Gorman at resource-centre@ottawa.anglican.ca or (613) 233-6271 ext 222



CO-SPONSORED BY THE DIOCESES OF ONTARIO AND OTTAWA

Nan Henderson Memorial Plan

Paul Dumbrille



Several years ago, the AFP (Canada) Executive Committee setup the Nan Henderson Memorial program to encourage and support new deacons and priests in their prayer life by providing them with a resource package on prayer. Nan was a long time member of the Canadian AFP Executive Committee and did a great deal of work for the Canadian AFP over the years.

Diocesan Representatives are asked and encouraged to be aware of ordinations which are taking place in their Diocese and present each ordinand with a package sometime during the ordination period (e.g. during the photos at the end of the service or at the reception following the service).

The program provides an excellent way of spreading the word about the AFP to new clergy and encouraging them in their prayer life. It is for example, very gratifying to hear such things as, "a certain new deacon gave a very good sermon on prayer to his new parish only a couple of months after being ordained".



Newly ordained Deacons being presented with Nan Henderson Kits in the Diocese of Ottawa, June 2006



We, the AFP(C) Executive, appreciate your prayers and donations for the ministry of AFP (Canada). If you are so moved, we encourage you to spread the word to others, both individuals and parishes, and encourage them to join AFP-C and to make a donation to support the ministry, and the publication and mailing of the newsletters. Please send to
**ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER,
 P.O. Box 5131, OTTAWA, ON K2C 3H4**

Prayer: Transformation of the Heart.

Tony Day



God encourages us to pray and answers some prayers and not others; we gradually get to know His heart as these experiences transform us. That is God's purpose for us. To transform us into the image of Jesus who knew how to pray, and did so, but did not need to be transformed. You cannot improve on perfect.

Our prayer activity or prayer life changes all the time. It is not the same now as it was when we were young or, indeed, what it will be next year. The reason is that our relationship with Jesus or God changes because we get to know Him better. Our understanding of His heart grows. When we were young much prayer centred on requests such as whom should I marry, what course should I take, should I become a missionary or be ordained. All of this was good stuff. However, there was much prayer that was not answered, winning a game, having a friend and when we were older saving a marriage, dealing with a rebellious teenager, stopping drinking etc.

Even though these prayers were not always answered, we were aware that the Lord was active in our life and our knowledge of God changed. As we read scripture, heard testimonies, read books and attended services we recognized that troubles were often good for us in the sense that we drew closer to the Lord; indeed we found our relationship with him exciting. We found ourselves thanking God more, that is prayer, accepting that He knew what he was doing, and was working all things together for good in our lives. We stopped telling Him what to do, that is prayer, and instead thanked him for what he was doing, and that is prayer. This is transformation of the heart in the sense of the heart being who we are: i.e. we put our heart into it.

This is exactly what scripture tells us is God's plan for us: be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

God created us in his image; this is clearly not a physical image, but a moral image. In Eden our image was smashed. Jesus on the cross was in the repair business: step one, getting us right with God; step two, offering resurrection of the smashed image into a new image. Only one person can lead the Christian life or live with the moral image of God, and that is Jesus. To make it possible for us to do this Jesus told us he would live in us. He does and the more he fills us the more we regain the moral image we were created to have.

Praying is a vital part of allowing the Lord to fill us and hence transform us. Talking to someone is the way we get to know a person; talking to God is the way we get to know him and to experience all he has for us. That is of course, prayer.

New Diocesan Representatives

The Reverend Valerie Kenyon

Diocese of Huron



Originally from Toronto, Valerie has called London home for the past 22 years. Looking for an affordable home for her then young family, she and husband Doug ventured the two hours west along the 401 and have been very happy they did. The time since then has flown by filled with the joys and challenges of raising three wonderful sons.

Prior to attending seminary, for many years Valerie was the Administrative Director of a local independent school, where in addition to her regular duties, she enjoyed representing those in administration and fund development in a network of independent schools across North America.

Since her youngest days Valerie's faith has been central to her life as has been her involvement at many levels in the Anglican Church of Canada. In 2006 Valerie began her studies at Huron University College. Ordained to the diaconate and priested in 2009, Valerie is currently serving as the Assistant Curate responsible for Family Ministry and Pastoral Care at St. James Westminster, in the heart of Old South, in London.

Also an Associate of the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine, Valerie is committed to ongoing development in her own spiritual life and that of those around her.

She resonates strongly with the goals and objectives of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, and is so honoured to be asked to play a role in encouraging prayer in the life of the Church, and in the lives of those whom she has been asked to serve.

The Reverend Susan Foley-Currie

Diocese of New Westminster



The Rev. Sue Foley-Currie specializes in Interim Ministry in the Diocese of New Westminster and serves on the Administration and Finance Committee. Sue was ordained and served in the Diocese of Rupert's Land and flies back to visit family in Winnipeg as a grandmother.

Sue likes to spend time at St. Benedict's Monastery or House of Bread Monastery for retreats and prayer plus golf and travel overseas. At present she is also completing an STM degree with the Prairie Jubilee Spiritual Direction program. Her personal spirituality is Benedictine and Celtic.

***Trust in the LORD with all
your heart and do not lean
on your own understanding.
Proverbs 3:5***

Diocese of Qu'Appelle **LAY RETREAT 2011**

(Silent Retreat for Women and Men)

St. Michael's Retreat, Lumsden

FRIDAY, APRIL 29

through

SUNDAY, MAY 1

***Theme:* Shaping the Heart:
Recognizing God's Work in Our Lives**

The Rev. Catherine Harper, *Conductor*

The Rev. Christopher Snook, *Chaplain*

Cost: \$160.00 per person

To Register for the Retreat

Complete the online form at:
www.quappelle.anglican.ca

and mail to: **Anglican Lay Retreat
c/o 267 N. Scarth Street
Regina, SK
S4R 2Z6**

QUESTIONS?? Please call: Lorraine Hardwick
Anglican Fellowship of Prayer
Diocesan Representative
(306) 545-4309 (evenings)

AFP-C National Resource Centre

Paruse, order and in some cases download AFP-C resources from our website:

www.anglicanprayer.org

Also, you can direct any questions about resources or to order any of our resources, please contact

Paul Dumbrille (paul.dumbrille@sympatico.ca)

or write to

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada)

Resource Centre

P.O. Box 5131, Ottawa, ON K2C 3H4

***Trust in the LORD forever,
for in GOD the LORD,
we have an everlasting Rock.
Isaiah 26:4***



Diocese of Calgary
Jane Richardson Jensen

Betty Nadurak, our Resource Co'ordinator, made a white tablecloth with AFP in large red letters on the frontispiece to call attention to the display table. It really adds a nice touch to the display table. I have also noticed that wherever

we are, people come over to greet the committee members behind the table before stopping to look at the material on the table. It seems the best way to involve people is by being active in the diocese yourself. Though I am still relatively unknown, the rest of our committee is well-known and respected. They seem to know *everyone*. I wonder if I'll be here long enough to learn the names of people all over the diocese. It's in God's hands.

As a result of an article I wrote for our diocesan newspaper, the Sower, last summer, St. Laurence's invited AFP to join them for their after church conversations and to display AFP materials. Thanks to the efforts of committee members Julie Hendrickson and Peter Millen, a few more conversations are in the offing. I encourage everyone to make full use of their diocesan papers.

Since Summer 2008, we have been concentrating on getting parish reps or contact names for each church in the diocese, (preferably not the rector, unless he/she really wants to do it). The list now covers about a third of the diocese, though this doesn't necessarily mean we have a paid up member at the church. We're working on that, too.

We have been working on details to assist the national executive with the DR conference in June. It looks like it'll be a great conference with something for body, mind, and soul. The property at Entheos where the conference is being held has extensive walking trails, a river, deer who come up to the lodge to eat (not with us though), stations of the cross and a wee prayer chapel in the woods. I look forward to seeing you there.



THAT WE MAY BE ONE

The Week of Christian Unity
 Diocese of Rupert's Land
 The Reverend Diane Guilford

Bronx Park Community Centre was an ideal setting for people to gather on January 26, 2011 for prayer and reflection during The Week of Christian Unity. The Kildonan

Community of Churches (United Church, Mennonite, Lutheran, Anglican) who have been hosting Prayer Services for 4 years now were asked to lead January 26 and it was thought it would be at St. Stephen's Anglican Church. The Rev. Diane Guilford felt that the ideal holy space for worship would be at Bronx Community Centre, so there was no doubt that this is a community prayer service. Kildonan Good Neighbours Choir (30 members) contributed greatly to filling the sanctuary (gym) with hymns. Lynda Pisa from The Prairie Messenger (RC) describes the space, "Outstanding symbols encircled the large gathering and spoke volumes. There were four circles in aboriginal colours, red, white, black and yellow, representing all peoples of the earth. Each circle was placed at one of the four directions.

The community stood facing each of the four directions in turn as we were led in Ojibway prayers for peace and harmony. At the front of the circle a world globe was placed on a table beside lit candles and a crucifix. In front of the table cascading from a single pole, were four separate strands of material also in the four aboriginal colours. Four women held one of the strands. During the prayers for peace and unity, the women moved about weaving the colours together as one braid to represent our becoming one in faith and action."

The scripture reading focused on the Gospel of John (17:10-21). The guest speaker Hittolyto Tshimanga, coordinator for mission work in Africa and Europe for the Mennonite church, reflected on how we should live as Christians. "No Church" said Tshimanga, "should be without the gut-feeling of mission and mission, accomplished by unity of Christians." He posed the question that out of two billion Christians worldwide, how do we begin to unify 38,000 different denominations? Christians, said Tshimanga, have been the most visible symbol of division. In the past we have often chosen the wrong way of bringing Christ to others. As early as the 1800's, the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury sanctioned and encouraged Christian unity as they recognized that in order to unite one another, we must love one another; in order to love one another, we must know one another; in order to know one another, we must meet with one another. Finally, after centuries of separation, the churches are uniting in prayer and respect. There were over 250 people at this worship which is a clear indication that people desire churches to connect more THAT WE MAY BE ONE.

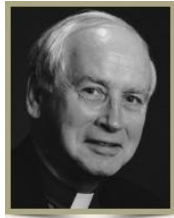


St. Stephen's Children and Youth Ministry Coordinator, Maraleigh Short

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer
Mid-day Prayer

By Bishop Reginald Hollis

Lord Jesus, give to your church a renewed desire to pray, that together we may know your will, be filled with your love, and experience your grace and power for the healing of your world, to your glory. AMEN

Archbishop Reginald Hollis

1932 – 2010

“It is with great sadness we heard of the passing of Archbishop Reginald Hollis on November 9, 2010. Yet there must be great joy in heaven as this

devoted man is welcomed to his heavenly home.”

Archbishop Hollis was born in Bedworth, England, July 18, 1932. He served in the Royal Air Force before he went on a scholarship to Selwyn College, Cambridge, where he studied theology. He arrived in Montreal as an exchange student in 1953, where he attended the Montreal Diocesan Theological College at McGill University before being ordained a priest in 1956.

He married Marcia Crombie in 1957.

Hollis was a chaplain at McGill and also lectured at the Faculty of Divinity before being named assistant rector at St. Matthias in Westmount. He went on to his own parish, St. Barnabas Church in Montreal's West Island. He was elected Bishop of Montreal in 1975, and then Archbishop of the ecclesiastical province of Canada in 1989.

Archbishop Hollis resigned in 1990 to become international director of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, based in Orlando, Florida, where he also became assistant bishop of the Diocese of Central Florida. Following the removal of a benign brain tumour, he served for several years as rector of St. Paul's in New Smyrna Beach. He retired to Victoria in 1997, but continued to work part time at St. John's in Duncan and St. Phillip's in Oak Bay. Until shortly before his death he assisted at St. Matthias, Victoria.

According to Betty Gracie, who knew Archbishop Hollis, “He will always be remembered as an exemplary man of prayer. The A.F.P. Noon Day Prayer attests to his sensitivity to God's encompassing purpose for His Church as it is lived out through its people.”

Archbishop Hollis was a quiet man, a prayerful man, who loved to preach. His sermons focused on the love of God. He was 78 when he died in Victoria. “He and Marcia, his wife for 53 years, were an

exceptional team together for A.F.P. Each for the other and both for the Lord.”

“When doing a workshop with the Niska in Greenville, B.C. I, Betty Gracie, was privileged to chat with Bert McKay, a native leader in Aiyansh, about Hollis' prayer. He said, “I am saturated with God right now.”---after some silence I dared to ask,---“and if the road got rocky?” “With God's help I turn the rocks into stepping stones.”

This is the kind of person Archbishop Hollis was.

Thanks to the Globe and Mail Nov. 19, 2010 and Betty Gracie of AFP

PRAYING THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

by Reginald Hollis

Do you believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and in God the Holy Spirit?

Our Father,

It's one thing to say the creed but another to put my trust in you. Help me to live with the assurance that you are my Father and that nothing can separate me from your love, trusting in your forgiveness expressed in Jesus

and looking to your Spirit to make me your person.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers?

Our Father,

I know I was not meant to go it alone because you created the church to be a supportive family for your children. And I know the church is made up of people like me

– so it isn't perfect!

Help me to play my part in the church, so I can learn from the teaching, be encouraged by the fellowship, be renewed in the Eucharist, and find strength for living each day through prayer.

Will you preserve in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Our Father,

You understand that sometimes I do things I never intended to do.

My sorrow does not put it right.

Neither can I use my weakness as an excuse.

Help me to begin anew,

to experience your forgiveness

and to walk again in Jesus' way.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Our Father,

Help me to live

the way Jesus called me to live.

May my actions speak louder

than my words

of your love and of new life in Jesus.

At the same time, help me rise above

my own stumbling speech

and give me the words to express what I believe.

Let me be a witness to the Truth.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

Our Father,

All too often I have looked at people in a very superficial way.

Help me begin to see them with your eyes knowing that every person is created in your image, as your child.

If Jesus died for that person, how can I despise them?

Give me a new love that reaches out to everyone because Jesus died for all.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?

Our Father,

I do not want my attitudes to be shaped by the injustices that mar society, by the discriminations, greed and lust that spoil relationships in Jesus

color does not count,

wealth carries no weight

and gender is not important.

Help me to live in Jesus,

to see people through His eyes,

and work for the harmony

that reflects your kingdom.

*Praying the Baptismal Covenant by Reginald Hollis
Copyright © 1993. (May be used with
acknowledgement to the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer)*

Editor's Note: *I have a copy in French of Praying the Baptismal Covenant if anyone could use it. Just email me if you would like a copy at winken@sympatico.ca.*

DRs

Need **additional newsletters?**

contact Paul Dumbrille

paul.dumbrille@sympatico.ca

or Win Mizon

winken@sympatico.ca



George Müller

(1805-1898)

George Müller was a man of faith and a prayer warrior. His ministry was blessed because he trusted God completely. His 63 year ministry included: the supported missionaries, the establishment of the Scriptural Knowledge Institute in England,

teaching Sunday school and day school, distributing Bibles and Christian tracts, and caring for England's orphans.

George Müller never asked anyone for money but trusted God to provide. The Müller story is not just a challenge for Christians in their walk with God, but equally it is for those who are not yet Christians, for in the many answers to prayer can be seen evidence of the reality of the things of God. This was Müller's aim and hope.

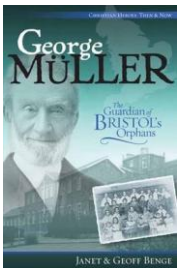
Müller once said, "Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be."

His story is worth reading.

**book - George Müller: The Guardian of Bristol's Orphans by Janet & Geoff Benge*

**download and read "The Bristol Miracle"*

**for more reading Google "George Müller"*



Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD
is my strength and my song.
Isaiah 12:2

ONE DAY AT A TIME

- The most useless thing to do **WORRY***
- The greatest Joy.....**GIVING***
- The greatest loss.....**LOSS OF SELF-RESPECT***
- The most satisfying work.....**HELPING OTHERS***
- The ugliest personality trait.....**SELFISHNESS***
- The most endangered species.....**DEDICATED LEADERS***
- The greatest "shot in the arm".....**ENCOURAGEMENT***
- The greatest problem to overcome.....**FEAR***
- Most effective sleeping pill.....**PEACE OF MIND***
- The most crippling failure disease.....**EXCUSES***
- The most powerful force in life.....**LOVE***
- The most dangerous pariah.....**A GOSSIPER***
- The world's most incredible computer.....**THE BRAIN***
- The worst thing to be without.....**HOPE***
- The deadliest weapon.....**THE TONGUE***
- The two most power-filled words.....**"I CAN"***
- The greatest asset.....**FAITH***
- The most worthless emotion.....**SELF-PITY***
- The most prized possession.....**INTEGRITY***
- The most beautiful attire.....**A SMILE***
- The most powerful channel of communication..... **PRAYER***
- The most contagious spirit.....**ENTHUSIASM***
- The most important thing in life.....**GOD***

Clasping Hands in Prayer



*A Sermon by the Reverend David Tiessen
St. George's Anglican Church, London
Text: Luke 11:1-13*

9th Sunday after Pentecost (25 July 2010)

"To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of this world." – Karl Barth

How often have you felt helpless before a situation in your life, or before some catastrophic event in the world, or closer to home, in those immediately around you – in your family and your friends? How often have you felt that relative to the magnitude of what you were facing, there was only so much you could do, and even that little bit felt like you could only put a little finger in a huge dike? How often have you then realized that it might be a good idea to pray too, in addition to all else that you were doing to see your way through?

Karl Barth's thought that "To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of this world" challenges us with the notion that prayer can never be just an addition to all else that we might be doing to see our way through. It challenges us that the first thing to be done is to pray, that we start from there, so that prayer may become the foundation of something much larger: resistance to the disorder around us.

There was a book a while back titled *Too Busy Not to Pray*.¹ Some of you may have read it; for some reason I never quite got around to it – perhaps because I always figured the title itself made the point well enough, and the title has always stuck with me as a reminder.

To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of this world." / "Too busy not to pray." Both make the same point: the foundation of our lives is in something that is intangible, unmeasurable, unquantifiable, and because of that – because we, along with our culture, tend to assume that everything must have some immediate use, some obvious way of measuring whether something is effective or not – because of that we so often assume that prayer is superfluous or even unnecessary, the icing on the cake: "I might as well pray too; it can't hurt." Because prayer is viewed that way, I think we do find ourselves too busy to pray, too busy to resist the chaos by remembering God as the source of order and of peace and also of patience and of course of faith, hope, and love.

And yet so often recently I have heard tell from a number of you just how deeply prayer has mattered to you in your lives, and how even those who do not believe have somehow known that prayers uttered on their behalf have made a difference in their healing and recovery, in their attitudes, in their ability to keep afloat in dark times. This is, I think, because to pray, and to receive prayer, gets down under all the garbage we let pile on top of it. It's like when the roots of our teeth get encrusted with tartar such that in order for the dentist to actually examine our teeth, all the tartar must be scraped off first to make the base of the tooth visible. That's what prayer does; prayer cuts to the quick, gets to the base of things. To pray is to acknowledge what we really know deep down every day but don't really ever want to acknowledge: In the words of Canadian writer Douglas Coupland, it is to acknowledge that I am sick and that I can't do it alone; that I need God.² To pray is to acknowledge that at the bottom of our lives lies what cannot be controlled, that at the bottom of our lives there is a certain chaos about which we can't do a whole lot, no matter how hard we try to order our lives against

disorder.

Today's Gospel begins by noting that Jesus was "praying in a certain place" and that the disciples then ask him to teach them to pray. So Jesus begins to teach the disciples what the Church now continues to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come." With that we see perhaps the most basic point about prayer: prayer begins *from* ourselves but not *with* ourselves. Prayer begins in our turning toward this one whom Jesus addresses as his 'Father'. The first thing Jesus teaches the disciples is that because of him – because they are identified as his followers – they are able to address God along with him, as those who are of the same family with him, adopted into the family of the God whose name is holy and whose kingdom is to come. So prayer begins with the gift of God to us, with being made part of God's family.

From there, Jesus illustrates for the disciples the character of the God to whom they pray. And this is all-important: A traveller arrives late, and arrives hungry. The host is out of bread – because bread is not kept overnight at that time; bread is baked and consumed during the day, so no one would expect to find bread available at such a late hour. However, the traveller is hungry. The host goes over to the neighbour's place and bangs on the door. Get lost, he's told, I'm sleeping. But the friend does get up to give him what he needs. In this case he gives him bread – bread that he wouldn't have, because no one has bread in the middle of the night.

Now you're scratching your heads, as was I. I learned something new in studying this passage³ Jesus is telling a deliberately preposterous story. The whole situation is ridiculous. Just as the host would not have had bread, neither would the friend. Even more ridiculous is the notion that the friend would lie in bed and refuse to come to the door. To refuse to get up would be a costly breach of the social mores of the time – it would be to risk dishonouring not only himself but also his friend – and indeed he would risk dishonouring the whole village, because a hungry traveller must be welcomed and fed. So the people who heard this would have laughed because such a thing would not happen. It is preposterous: *of course* he would get up and do what he could, either for friendship's sake, or simply for duties' sake.

And while they're laughing, Jesus delivers the punchline: "Ask, and it will be given; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." Of course it will! Would you give your child a snake instead of a fish? A scorpion instead of an egg? Of course not! So when you knock at God's door in prayer, you should consider it preposterous, ridiculous to imagine that God would refuse to wake up!

Jesus is teaching, with this over-the-top parable, just how silly it would be to think that God would not respond to prayer. And Jesus asserts That "everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Now that seems pretty simple – and yet I think it safe to say that this very saying takes us into another problem. Our experience is varied, is it not? Sometimes we ask, search, and knock, and yet seem *not* to receive, find, and have the door opened. Sometimes it seems we do receive, find, and walk through doors, and then we say "Thanks be to God" with joy. But, other times it seems we don't receive, and we are frustrated, and perhaps wonder where God is? Why is this or that door not opening? And then perhaps our faith is tested; perhaps it even begins to dry up, and we feel swallowed by the chaos rather than rescued from it.

It must be acknowledged that there's no easy answer to that

problem. But I think the beginning of understanding lies here. Jesus is teaching us to pray. And that prayer begins not with ourselves but in our turning to God, to acknowledge first that God is holy, and to pray that God's kingdom will come. From there we are to pray for daily bread (basic sustenance), for forgiveness, and for freedom from trial (i.e., freedom from ongoing persecution, for peace). In praying that, we turn our lives in a certain direction, and toward a certain place. That direction, that 'certain place', is the place where Jesus is. And what Jesus is doing when he teaches these disciples is preparing them to understand *himself* as the one who is daily bread, as the one who enters the brokenness of sin and who forgives, and as the very one enters into the deepest trial of all: death itself.

Throughout the Bible, death is related to chaos, to disorder, to things that do not properly belong to God's good creation. And so Jesus asks: does the child receive a snake and a scorpion instead of food? By no means. No one would do that! So "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

What does the Holy Spirit have to do with food? The Holy Spirit is the opposite of the snake and the scorpion. The Holy Spirit is the life of God shared among us. The Holy Spirit is the very opposite of death. Here Jesus shows us the base of the tooth: The base of prayer comes to light as: *trust*. In the face of chaos and disorder, when we feel too busy and frazzled to pray, to stop and pray is to resist what takes us away from the source of our lives, and to turn to what really matters: to the God who is revealed by the Son as the Father to us all, as the one who adopts us as children, who hears us in our distress, and who gives good gifts – even if we can't always perceive these as the gifts we want! To ask, seek, and knock is indeed to find: but it is first of all to find a Person, not a thing that can be measured or made into a formula. It is to find the God whose name is holy, and whose kingdom turns this world upside down; the God who hears, the God who can be trusted, because first and foremost this very God has come among us in Christ Jesus, has embraced human life in all its frailty and in all its disorder. (That is, in fact, the place to look when answers do not seem to be forthcoming.) So the first thing (and the last thing) to remember in prayer is this: God is the God who brings this world to its proper order. That is the Kingdom Coming. And that Kingdom comes firstly in the Jesus who is our daily bread, our forgiveness of sins, our freedom in the midst of trial. Jesus is these things because in Jesus God resists the chaos and disorder of this world. When we pray, we are joined into God's resistance to a world of death, and we are formed into life. And so let us be too busy not to pray, and let us clasp our hands together again in prayer. Amen.

1. Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing Down to Be With God*, rev. ed (IVP, 1998).

2. Douglas Coupland, *Life After God* (Pocket Books, 1994).

3. Thanks to Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Eerdmans, 1997), 447.

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