

Anglican Fellowship OF **PRAAYER** Canada



AFP-C NEWSLETTER - Vol. 19, No. 3

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2011

THREE GIFTS

HERBERT O'DRISCOLL

I am a hoarder. Not of things. As regards things, I'm the very opposite, always looking for an excuse to throw something out. This of course can sometimes get me into trouble but that's another story...

I hoard what I think are lovely things, quotations, pieces of prose or poetry, prayers, snatches of conversations, short short stories. I hoard them and then for some reason, I don't understand, I find I can remember where they are when I need them. I thought what I would do at this season is to do what the Magi did, to bring three gifts. I was given them years ago and I have never forgotten them.

The first is a piece by the Swedish writer Sigrid Undset...

And when we give each other Christmas gifts in His name, let us remember that He has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, and the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans – and all that lives and moves upon them.

He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit – and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused – and to save us from our own foolishness, from all our sins, He came down to earth and gave us himself.

My second gift – and of course I am only the bearer once again. The gift comes from that wonderful poet laureate of England John Betjeman. The poem is simply called CHRISTMAS and this is just a verse or two, but I think it is the heart of the poem.

*And is it true? And is it true?
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a child on earth for me?*

- continued on page 2 -



MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL DIRECTOR

THE RT. REV. GARY WOOLSEY

Dear Friends in Christ,

In September, I had the privilege of leading a 'Hunger for Healing' Retreat Day at Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre in Cochrane, Alberta.

People from St. Peter's and St. Martin's parishes came together to reflect on their prayer life, share their prayer journeys, have times of silence and to share in the Eucharist. The two sessions focused on 3 themes: 'Who Am I?', 'Who is God?' and 'How has my prayer life changed over the years?'. By understanding ourselves and our own unique personalities, we can learn that we approach God in different ways. But how we understand God will also determine how we will communicate with God. We looked back at how we viewed God as a child, as a young person, as a young adult and as a more 'senior' adult. Yet we also wanted to acknowledge our need to see ourselves as growing in our life of prayer or communication with God. Our times of sharing after silence were most encouraging as participants shared how God was touching their lives even when they had questions. One 90 year old lady shared how God was helping her to pray with others in the senior's residence even though she was very reluctant to do so because she had always left this ministry to the clergy. But God was not only 'stretching' her but also helping her to minister to others.

When we open ourselves to God's grace, love, forgiveness and healing, we may also be opening ourselves to a ministry of loving service to others. This may seem 'scary' at times because we may feel inadequate to the task. However, the Spirit is within us to give us courage and to guide us as we minister in Christ's Name.

Every Blessing to you as you pray for others.

Peace

+Gary

Bishop Gary Woolsey

AFP-Canada National Director

- picture on page 2 -

THREE GIFTS

- Continued from page 1-

*No love that in a family dwells,
No caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare –
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.*

My third gift. Once again I must remind myself it is not mine! This time the giver is Madeleine L'Engle, a person whose faith was deep, whose sense of humour was wonderful and whose imagination was boundless. Here is her poem for this season...

*This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war and hate,
And a nova lighting the sky to warn
That time runs out and the sun burns late.*

*That was no time for a child to be born
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour and truth were trampled by scorn,
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.*

*When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth;
And by greed and pride the sky is torn;
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.*

One can't help noticing that all three pieces capture the qualities that are the heart of this Holy Season – they are simple, profound and beautiful.

PLEASE NOTE:

Thank you to all those who support the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer – Canada by making a donation. AFP is a national organization with representatives in the different dioceses and parishes across the country.

It has come to our attention that some of you are giving your donation to the diocesan or parish representatives rather than sending it to

**The Anglican Fellowship of Prayer
P.O. Box 5131
Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3H4**

Please send all donations directly to the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer – Canada.



*'Hunger for Healing' Retreat Day at
Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre in Cochrane, Alberta*

A Note from the Chair**Esther Jackson****National Executive Chairperson**

One of my parish responsibilities is to send out a revised list of prayer intentions to the Prayer Circle each month. This is a list of prayer requests made by parish family and their friends for healing, courage, and support, for guidance, and discernment at a time of personal or family crisis, loss, struggle, grief or crossroads etc. Taking time to choose the wording, and being very slow on the computer keyboard, it took me almost two hours to prepare two pages of text. I finished the list, saved it, and printed a copy. Then when I went to send it out as an attachment, I couldn't find it. My son came to the rescue. In a matter of minutes he typed up a new document. The second blessing came when he said, "Doing that list made me realize how lucky I am to be healthy." He has, over the years, been worried about health concerns. He doesn't know any of the people on the list, but was amazed that people would be so open to share so much of their private lives. I assured him that prayer requests are kept in confidence. The experience was a moment of insight into his own life.

As in the Epistle of James, who tells us to "pray for one another ... The heartfelt prayer of a good man works very powerfully", we are called as Christians to pray for one another.

Presently I am also doing a Celtic prayer as a piece of calligraphy for a friend. Two of the lines are:

Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you.

Deep Peace of the Son of man to you.

These lines have become part of my prayer for God's healing in the lives of many of the people who have asked us as a prayer group to help carry the burden of concerns in their lives.



Tom Gracie

By Lesley Dunkerley

It was with a heavy heart that I learned of the passing from this life of Canon Tom Gracie or Tom as he was known to many of us in AFP Canada.

We had served with Tom on the Executive of AFP Canada for several years and I have so many happy memories of Tom. He would often look at me with that

smile of his and twinkle in his eye and I just knew that he was about to come out with some witty remark. I remember fondly the many meetings we had at the Gracie's lovely home in Orillia. Tom was always very supportive of Betty or Madam Chair as he called her in her role as Director of AFP Canada. We all enjoyed Tom's wise counsel, ready wit and especially the barbecued steaks he would whip up for our lunches.

My husband and I first met Tom and Betty at a Prayer and Practice Workshop that we attended at All Saints Anglican Church, Westboro in the Diocese of Ottawa. This was in 1983 as I recall. It was wonderful to listen to Tom and Betty. They were so committed to encouraging and teaching us all about the importance of prayer. They gave so much of themselves to this ministry, and when we were appointed Diocesan Representatives for the Ottawa Diocese and then invited to join the Executive Committee they were there for us with much support and good advice. We had many trips with them to Conferences in the States, Bahamas and across Canada. Tom and Betty were gracious hosts at these Conferences and would get the Canadian attendees together in their room so that we could "meet and greet". Everyone was included and no one felt left out.

I will always remember Tom together with so many others whose lives he touched. He was a wonderful person and a true servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you dear Tom. May you "Rest in Peace."

Editor's Note: Canon Thomas Gracie passed from this life on Friday, October 7, 2011 in his 82nd year.



***Though we cannot think alike,
May we not love alike?
May we not be of one heart,
Though we are not of one opinion?"***
- John Wesley

AFP National Executive Sets Goals

Bishop Gary Woolsey, National Director



On June 3, 2011, the members of the National Executive established its working goals which would take it to the next General Synod in 2013. It is our hope that each level of AFP (Diocesan and Parish AFP committees) will likewise set goals that are simple yet achievable.

Mission:

The National Executive will strive to uphold the mission statements of AFP (Canada). It will establish working goals to respond to the mission of AFP as well as the expressed needs of its members.

Goals:

1. We, the Executive, will prayerfully provide resources and encouragement to all Diocesan and Parish Representatives as they seek to carry out their ministries.
2. In consultation with Diocesan and Parish Representatives we will strive to increase our membership through donations and assist in providing resources to accomplish this.
3. We will aim to add at least one new prayer resource each year.
4. We will encourage each Diocese to hold at least one workshop on prayer each year. The Executive members will offer themselves as a resource to accomplish this.
5. We will strive to find ways to offer thanks for all that is happening to deepen the life of prayer in individuals and parishes.
6. With the support and encouragement of our Patron, the Primate, we will seek to find ways to encourage all those who have responsibility for implementing the 'Marks of Mission' in the Anglican Communion and General Synod's 'Vision 2019'.

Vision 2019:

The Five Marks of Mission

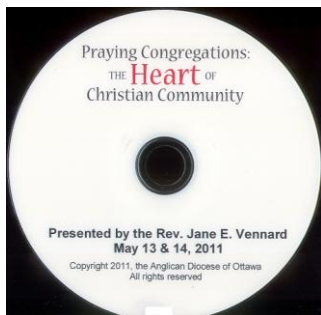
The national office of the Anglican Church of Canada works to live out the **Five Marks of Mission**, mission priorities used widely around the Anglican Communion. They are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Editor's Note: I encourage you to Google "Vision 2019" and "Marks of Mission" for more information and reports.

New Resource!!

Paul Dumbrille, AFP Resource Coordinator



In the most recent edition of this Newsletter, there was an article entitled “Praying Congregations, The Heart of Christian Community – An Answer to Prayer”. It contained some highlights of a conference sponsored by the Dioceses of Ottawa and Ontario held in May, 2011.

Our AFP (Canada) Resource Centre now has copies of a DVD that contains the presentations made by Rev. Jane Vennard at that event.

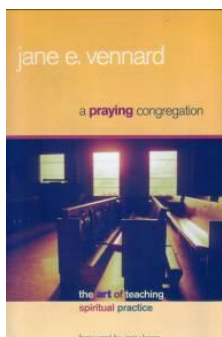
This new resource can be used either in a one-day event or in a series of shorter occasions such as an evening or daytime study. There are five sections entitled: “Learning to Pray”; “Experiencing Prayer”; “Intercessory Prayer”; “Wordless Prayer”; and “Becoming a Praying Congregation”.

Copies of the DVD can be obtained from our Resource Centre at a cost of \$10 each plus mailing.

Book Review

A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice

Written by Rev. Jane E. Vennard
Reviewed by Paul Dumbrille



In this very useful book, Jane Vennard invites readers to gently explore questions such as, Who taught you to pray and how? What do you believe about prayer? What is your image of the God to whom you pray? and What is prayer anyway? Through this book, readers’ hearts are made ready to explore the

wonder of strengthening their relationship with God through prayer.

In reading this book I can only echo Richard Rohr who has written, “I have been saying that we should drop all church programs for a year and just teach our people how to pray! This book could well be the foundation and program for that teaching. Jane Vennard has given us guidance that is both simple and profound, practical yet very mature, personal yet social. Her wisdom about prayer is what we need!”

What we believe about prayer “offers us opportunities to ponder the wonder of prayer” (p. 38) writes Vennard. Anyone who has been a part of any worshipping body realizes that there is no total agreement where theology is concerned. Vennard’s approach is that those people in a praying congregation share their beliefs but do not present them as the right and only method of communing with God. Without talking down to readers, Vennard takes the time to examine

some basic images of God—some very old and common, and others new and unique. She encourages the pilgrim to keep what is working and discard what no longer fits, similar to cleaning out one’s closet after a time of change and growth. In another very useful chapter, Vennard provides the reader with a succinct overview of a variety of forms of prayer.

The book is a delightful tool for those encouraging prayer in their congregation, providing ideas to the reader to grow in their individual spiritual life as well as leading a congregation on a prayer-filled journey.

This book was the inspiration that led me to lead an effort to bring Jane to Ottawa in May of this year to a conference we called: Praying Congregations; The Heart of Christian Community, which I wrote about in the most recent edition of this Newsletter and for which we now have a DVD in our Resource Centre.

“A Praying Congregation” is published by The Alban Institute, Herndon, VA, U.S.A. in 2005 and can be obtained directly from Alban Institute, ordered through a bookstore or ordered online from Amazon.

Resource Pricing Policy

Paul Dumbrille



After reviewing the recent costs of obtaining our printed resources, as well as comments made over the years about the difficulty in trying to keep track of the individual costs of each of our many

resources, the AFP (Canada) has decided to update and simplify the “price” of our resources to those who order them from us. It has been decided to set the price of our resources at multiples of \$0.50. We are retaining the principle that we do not set the price to make money, but rather to ensure that we cover our costs in procuring them. For example if it costs us \$0.83 per copy to have a pamphlet printed, we will make it available for \$1.00. In this manner we can keep the cost steady for a reasonable length of time regardless if printing costs go up in the future.

True Devotion

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

- COLOSSIANS 4:2

God, can You work with me on my commitment issues? Build in me a desire to pray. I want to be a disciplined follower. Steady my spirit to stillness. Quiet and solitude prepare me for Your presence. Direct my eyes to be watching for Your answers, watching as my prayers are heard and responded to. I want to see and recognize Your work in my life.

Cause my faith to grow, Lord. Each day that I come to meet with You, may I know You better. Replace my ignorance with Your knowledge. Help me be strong in my commitment to You. Show me how to pray, Lord.

Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland Labrador

The Reverend Gregory Mercer, Diocesan Representative



“Excellent, informative, call to action!”
 “Uplifting, refreshing!” “Totally satisfied!”
 “Awesome!” “All inspired me!” “Excellent workshop. When is the next one?” These are just a sampling of the 100 percent positive response to our AFP weekend.

On the weekend of September 30 and October 1, 2011, the AFP, Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador held its first conference in a number of years. In many ways it was a fresh start. The whole intent of the conference was to introduce and educate both clergy and lay parish representatives about the mission and importance of the AFP.

Friday evening was an open invitation to the whole diocese to join our Bishop, The Right Reverend Cyrus Pitman along with our special guest, The Right Reverend Gary Woolsey, retired Bishop of the Diocese of Athabasca and the AFP National Director, for a special worship service introducing the ministry of healing and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The service was held at a Parish central to the diocese, and was well attended. Music was provided by the local music team and *Jordan’s Light*, a gospel band from an adjacent parish. Bishop Gary gave the homily after which an invitation was extended to the congregation to come forward for the ministry of healing and anointing. It was of no surprise that many came forward to be anointed. The service concluded with a celebration of the Eucharist followed by a time of fellowship in the parish hall.

The conference continued with an all-day event on Saturday at the Diocesan Camp and Conference Centre. Again the focus of the workshop was to educate lay people and nurture them into their role as parish representatives. Essentially the role of a PR is to support their clergy by encouraging and enabling the ministry of prayer in their parishes thereby extending the Bishop’s call to prayer for the whole diocese. The conference began and ended in prayer. It included a Bible study on Prayer, presentations by Bishop Gary on the mission and vision of AFP, as well as a number of presentations by clergy on AFP resources and other topics such as prayer and confidentiality. Rectors were encouraged to commission their lay representatives during a regular church service and to commission those who are ‘Alongsiders’ – a prayer ministry for our seniors and shut-ins. Our Bishop concluded the conference with a number of acknowledgements along with a list of challenging prayer requests for the diocesan team and the newly appointed PR’s. All-in-all it was quite a success with over 40 clergy and lay people in attendance.

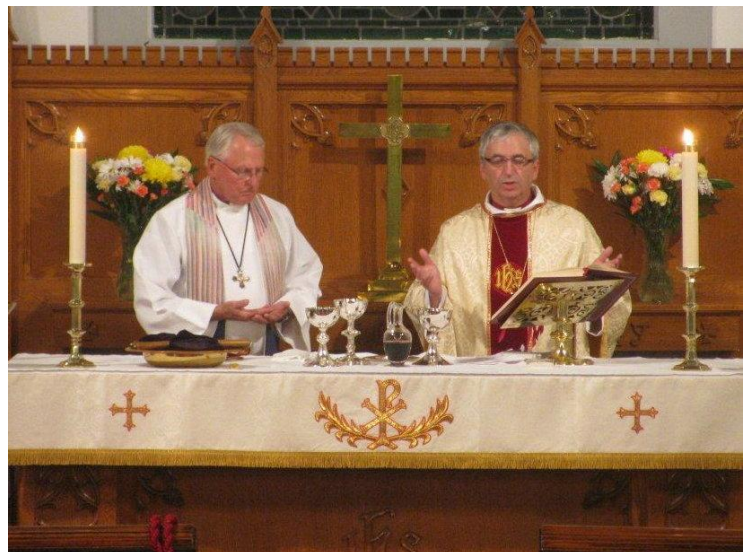
This is a good start for the AFP (Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador) at getting re-organized. Future plans would certainly include responding to our Bishop’s prayer requests, organizing a prayer vigil for our upcoming

Diocesan Synod and organizing other workshops on the archdeaconry level to address the local congregation as a means and a center of prayer.

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!



Conference Participants



Bishop Gary Woolsey and Bishop Cyrus Pitman



Jordan’s Light: (L. to R.) Malcolm Lynch, Aubrey Young, David White and Bob Bishop



Children's Ministry Elizabeth Short

As the person responsible for children's ministry in my parish, I spend a significant amount of time considering ways in which I can engage the children in worship as well as present relevant, fun and informative teaching. I also conduct a week-long Vacation Bible School in the summer and 2 one-day events at Christmas and Easter. This is all extremely important work. We all need to take our part to make children feel welcome and involved and we need to support the people who devote time to children's ministries.

As important as this is, stellar church programs are not enough to ensure that children will grow up with an active faith if it is not modelled in the home. Children learn by example. If they are never read to and never see their parents reading, chances are slim that they will be avid readers when they are adults. The same can be said for faith. Statistics will show that when people are asked who were the major influences in their life of faith, parents come first and grandparents come second. Sunday school teachers, youth pastors and clergy are well down the list.

I recently conducted a session for parents and children on the practice of family devotions. I used the example of brushing teeth as a way to emphasize the importance of regular practice. I had fun with the idea as I quizzed the kids about whether or not they brush their teeth; how often this practice was expected; if their parents ever check to see if their brushes are wet after they say they have brushed; and whether or not their parents brush their teeth. We decided it must be a fairly important thing to do because of the zeal that was given it! It is an ingrained practice. So too should be family devotions. We then went on to talk about making devotions a regular and scheduled practice; something that includes all; and engaging and relevant to all. For example, if you can realistically only manage it during the week and not on weekends, then that's what you should do. And if your young children have about a 3 minute attention span, then perhaps it should only last for 2. These ideas have been adapted from a program called *Faith At Home*.

I have come to believe that what I do at church is to support what is being taught in the home, not the other way around. It can't be assumed that parents will know how to share faith, prayers, or scripture with their children. We need to find ways to teach and encourage them.

Commissioning of Parish Representatives

The Executive has prepared a simple liturgy that can be used to "Commission" one or more Parish Representative(s). A copy can be found in Section VIII of the latest revision of the DRs Handbook. The revised DRs Handbook is available on our website (www.anglicanprayer.org) in the "About AFP > Handbooks and Guidelines" section.

Trent-Durham Area Prayer Conference St. Luke's, Peterborough

J. Douglas Woods, Trent-Durham Prayer Committee

By now, most of us in the Diocese of Toronto have at least HEARD of **Natural Church Development (NCD)**. This programme is rooted in the research of Christian Schwarz, and one of his findings, after looking at thousands of churches around the world, is that regardless of denomination, size, geographical location, or ethnicity, there is a strong correlation between strong prayer life and strong life as the church.

Schwarz uses the analogy of a barrel holding water; if one of the staves of the barrel is shorter than the others, the barrel begins to leak its contents out. One of the staves in Schwarz's barrel is **PRAYER LIFE**.

A tempting question is, "Can we strengthen the life of our church by strengthening our prayer life?" We have to ask about the motivation for that question. If it means, "Can we control the strength of our church by using prayer?" then we might have some concerns; is that a bit like trying to control the weather by twisting the dial of our barometer? On the other hand, if the question means, "If we repair that stave — if we attempt, through scripture and prayer, to understand the will of God — will our church become stronger?" that's a good question.

The Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (AFP), fosters just such questioning, and the Archbishop's Committee on Prayer (ACOP) in this diocese does that, too. In that spirit, the ACOP presents a prayer conference every other year, and in the off years, the different episcopal areas of the diocese have smaller, more local, prayer events. In the Trent-Durham Area, that event took the form of a mini-conference at St. Luke's, Peterborough on Saturday, October 29.

The title, *I'm Too Busy to Pray*, reflected a common problem in our society: finding time to do important things in the face of the demands other parts of our life make on us. Approximately seventy-five people came out to spend the day listening to our speaker, Bishop Patrick Yu — and to listen to each other and the Spirit talking about prayer.

The day was interactive and hands-on. Bishop Yu challenged us to talk to another person at our table about our spiritual life and to listen to them talking about theirs. He asked us to participate in some very hands-on exercises involving different TYPES of prayer. He asked us if the same MODEL of prayer life works for all of us. Answer: emphatically "NO!" Is there a model of prayer we SHOULD be following? Answer: emphatically "NO!"

Bishop Yu does not lecture, he facilitates; he leads the hearer to the answer that works for **THEIR** life. Judging by the reaction in the room, it seems that the answer to "I'm too busy to pray" might well be, "Actually, you're probably not; you might want to consider, though, whether it **FEELS** that way because you're trying to do something that doesn't work for you" — a bit like trying to sprint in shoes that are three sizes too big?

- Please see pictures on Page 8 -



Praying in the Storm

Tony Day

There was a lot of buzz in the room during this event.

This was the theme of a Day of Encouragement for the prayer reps in the York Credit Valley area of the Diocese of Toronto on October 22nd.

The theme which focused on the book of Jonah spotlighted the prayers of the sailors in the storm and Jonah in the belly of the great fish where he prayed a prayer of gratitude: not a bad thing to do when you are in the belly of a big fish.

“Jonah” attended the event sharing his experience and giving us his opinion of what went on at that time. No doubt you are unaware of the fact that Jonah had a Scottish accent! The day started with an exercise titled the calm before the storm.

Participants chose a picture, such as you might see on a church calendar and for about 10 minutes they looked prayerfully at the picture and then shared with another person what the picture meant to them about life or the Lord. This is a wonderful way of experiencing the Lord and is useful for starting a meeting such as the advisory board.

After coffee we studied chapter one noting how the prayers of the sailors changed as they experienced who God is. It is also our experience. The more we know and trust God the more intimate our prayers become.

The participants then formed in to small groups and spent twenty minutes or so considering some questions gleaned from chapter one. Did you know that there are three instances in this chapter that point to the life of Jesus?

The next session, following the same format, dealt with chapter two and Jonah’s prayer, and, as mentioned above it was a prayer of gratitude and we noted Jonah never asked to be rescued.

After lunch we reflected on some of the hard questions we ask when we’re in the midst of a personal storm or crisis closing this session with a guided meditation.

It really was a Day of Encouragement for those of us who attended and we say with confidence that it was the Lord’s doing and it was marvellous to behold.

AFP Intercessors' Prayer

Our Father, we pray your blessing
on those you have called to be
Intercessors in the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer.

Help us to persist in prayer,
with an awareness of your loving goodness
and your ability to accomplish abundantly
far more than all we can ask or imagine.

May we know that in your will
all things work together for good
through Jesus who ever lives
to make intercession for us. Amen.



Praying for Enemies: A Spirituality of Bewilderment

Karen Holmes

*MRE & Spiritual Director,
DR for the Diocese Of Ontario*

We know that Christ asks us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Mt. 5:44). We see whom our culture deems to be enemies every night when we turn on the evening news.

Some of those enemies are known within our borders, and others lurk in dark corners throughout the breadth of the world. As people of prayer, perhaps we add on a few petitions for our enemies to the end of our daily prayers: “Dear Lord, bless so-and-so; may they turn from their evil ways.” If we are more diligent, perhaps our list is more comprehensive and our healing desires for the enemy more elaborate, but the formula remains the same: we offer a petition-prayer for someone who has done something which we cannot condone and which may have adversely affected those things which we hold dear.

If undertaken faithfully, there is no doubt that this prayer-practice is powerfully transformative. I have heard stories of lives altered. But is this what Jesus meant by his commandment to love enemies and pray for those who persecute us? Or was something involving a little more personal engagement intended?

The word for 'enemy' in Jesus' native Aramaic tongue can be translated as 'one with whom one is out of step.' On the Aramaic worldview, the whole cosmos was said to vibrate with a melody and in a rhythm that makes a music similar to what medieval philosophers called the music of the spheres. In this cosmology each person also vibrates with a particular tone and rhythm. When persons meet, the music of one is meant to complement the other, producing a richer sound than anyone might be able to generate on one's own. But sometimes the music of one person or a group of people does not vibrate in - step with another, and the melodies are dissonant. We find ourselves talking at cross-purposes; confusion and muddle arise. We are left with all manner of feelings: isolation, betrayal, abandonment, anger, humiliation, shame, and sometimes we are just plain bewildered -- “What was *that* all about?”

Now the concept of enemy becomes much broader: it can become the spouse who never seems to understand our interests or needs; it can be the child that seems to reject us as a parent; or the friend who now seems to judge us. And this concept of enemy fans out beyond our immediate household: the enemy can become a society that no longer seems to speak to your values, the teller of a joke that holds no humour for you, or a network of social relationships that is all surface-civility and which can crumble in an instant.

“Oh no,” you say, “you've just made this more complicated. How am I ever going to pray for enemies now? This list is growing way too long. I'm not even sure who would be on the list! And what should I be praying for anyhow!”

Let's look to the communion of saints for some thoughts on praying for enemies. Let's take as an example, John the Baptist.

Now there was a man who had enemies (in both the evening-news and the Aramaic-sense): he preached a direct-baptism in a world where the mighty Roman occupier dictated most aspects of civil society, where the Temple-cult judged the status of an individual's relationship with God, and where correct interpretation of the Law (or complete withdrawal from society altogether) had become the means of choice to spiritually oppose all the corruption. Now don't you think John the Baptizer just might have looked around and said, in his own vernacular terms, "Lord, what planet am I on?" Don't you think that he too might have been bewildered?

So it is interesting that we meet the (possibly) bewildered John in the wilderness, eating locusts and wild honey and proclaiming, "I am the voice crying out in the wilderness; prepare the way of the Lord."

Jesus also went out to the wilderness to pray. He went out into the wilderness for forty days before he began his teaching-ministry. Daily he went off to a quiet place: he went up to the mountain-top, he went out into the middle of a sea, and he withdrew off by himself to spend time in communion with His Father. Was Jesus bewildered, too? What dissonance of music and rhythm did he suffer as he engaged the world of human pride, loss and sin? Were we all His 'enemies'? Somehow – was it through this prayer of this wilderness? -- he was able, by the close of his ministry, to call us all 'friends'. This was the way of the Lord.

The way of the Lord is spoken and made in the wilderness. How so? Imagine yourself in that Palestinian desert. What might begin to unfold in you?

In the first place, we come to recognize: We have all been in wilderness-experiences – experiences that throw us out of ourselves and throw us (at least potentially) onto the way of the Lord. Falling in love, a sudden illness, the birth of a child, the death of a parent, a VE-day, an invasion-day, the loss of a job, a family-secret out of the closet. At these times, our perceptions shift, our values and goals can be re-prioritized, and we may come to awarenesses that truly allow us to develop as a disciple and learner of Christ.

The way of the Lord is spoken and made in the wilderness. And it happens in

this way:

First, we come to recognize God at the centre of our being. There is no one to cling to except God in the wilderness; here we learn to hunger and thirst for God. The spirituality of the wilderness is the spirituality of desire for God, and the foundation of this spirituality is prayer of the heart.

Second, this desire for God has neither obstacle nor distraction. Gone are the social conventions and routines that sustained us in a functioning persona; gone are the things that kept us tied to what was known as reality.

Third, we are prompted to face our own inner demons, cares, expressions, past mistakes and future fears. This raw stuff of self permits us to see ourselves as the flawed (yet) beloved of God.

Lastly, in the wilderness, a deep prayer for enemies, based in compassion and love, becomes possible. Here, in the stillness and the silence, we begin to recognize that of which we are all capable, and we can say, along with the Renaissance philosopher Montaigne, "Nothing of man is foreign to me."

Thus the way of the Lord comes in the wilderness, the way of the Great Leveler; He who raised the valleys and brings the mountains low. It becomes possible to speak of the enemy in ways that we would not, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, have been capable of perceiving or knowing. This shift is not pre-determined or foreknown: it is only in *walking through* the wilderness that the new awareness can be revealed.

But, according to the Aramaic understanding of enemy, *we are already there*. We do not need dramatic external event, for we are surrounded by 'enemies' who bewilder us. If we allow that bewilderment to breathe for one moment as it is, without pre-empting it through either a petitionary prayer of words or through self-defending anger; if we open our heart in a prayer of presence to and with God, then we might all enter the grace of the wilderness.

What happens in the wilderness? Prayer for enemies becomes more than adding names to one's regular prayer of petition; instead it becomes an invitation and an instrument for God's grace to transform self and world in, with and through the Holy Spirit.

Trent-Durham Area Prayer Conference Pictures



Book Display from Footprints, Lindsay, ON



Guest Speaker: Bishop Patrick Yu



Marilyn MacKenzie, June Banbury, Donna Ferguson & Cathy Axcell setting up lunch

AFP-C Newsletter Editor

Winnifred (Win) Mizon

519-433-7485

winken@sympatico.ca