

Prayer Chains

For Intercessory Prayer

Anglican
Fellowship of
Prayer (Canada)



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Intercessory Prayer—Praying for Others

The true purpose of praying for others is to offer ourselves as channels of God's Grace. When we speak of Christ as our intercessor, we do not mean that He is standing between us and an angry God, pleading for mercy: but that He, who by His death and resurrection, has broken down the barrier which sin has raised up, is standing between God and ourselves as the connecting link, or channel through which the Father's love may flow freely to His children. When we act as intercessor we are forming a link in the chain. We are offering our hearts as channels, through which the healing love of God may be directed to those for whom we are praying. We put, as it were, one hand in the hand of Jesus, and the other in the hand of the person(s) we are praying for, believing that the love can flow through us to him/her/them. When we pray, let us take care that there is nothing in our hearts to hinder the flow.

[Based on the ideas in "Christ Healing" by E. Howard Cobb.]

An Intercessory Prayer Chain

An Intercessory Prayer Chain consists of a group of people which has been called to the ministry of praying for others on a regular and ongoing basis. They have committed themselves to **pray regularly, confidentially and individually** for the people and concerns that are requested of them. They form part of a chain through which God's love flows, and they circulate prayer requests and results among themselves via a communications chain. Prayer Chains are most often organized amongst people of a church congregation or parish. It is important to liaise with, and receive input and support from, the parish priest.

Requests for Prayer

The Prayer Chain prays for particular situations and persons that come to it from a variety of sources:

- ✝ The parish/congregation pastor or priest or church office;
- ✝ A prayer request box;
- ✝ Phone calls from members of the parish/congregation;
- ✝ Individual requests;
- ✝ Situations known to the members of the chain.

The members of the Prayer Chain set their own guidelines for what they will pray for. Some chains act solely as avenues for short term (a week or less) emergency situation prayers (crisis situations, medical emergencies, deaths etc.). Others may decide to pray for longer term situations (illness, parish leaders, clergy etc.). It is critical that the Prayer Chain clearly establishes what it will pray for, how they will operate, and agree on a person who will screen the prayer requests and keep track of what is being prayed for.

Members of a Prayer Chain

Members of a Prayer chain are committed to pray regularly, preferably daily, for the concerns brought to them. The members must be able to communicate effectively with others so as to be able to receive prayer requests and accurately pass them on to others in the chain.

Confidentiality

It is important that the members of the Prayer Chain be able to keep what they pray for confidential and to themselves. While the knowledge of some of the situations and people they pray for will be widely known, many are confidential and must not be talked about except in the context of passing on the information to another person on the chain.

Regular Prayer

The members of the Prayer Chain pray individually for the concerns given them. Each person chooses their own time, place and method of praying, but they are committed to regular prayer for others. This is not something everybody can do. It is for those who are called to do it. Sometimes there is a desire by some to know all the technical or medical details of the situation or infirmity being prayed for. However, knowing details can fix our minds on the infirmity and prevent us from connecting with God. It is, perhaps, sufficient to know that someone is in distress and is in need of prayer, and the general situation. Our prayers should be positive rather than negative, dwelling on the perfection to which God wills to bring to the person or situation, rather than the imperfection which exists.

Coordination

Experience has shown that a Prayer Chain needs one person, who is not the parish rector or pastor, to act as the coordinator. The coordinator has four principle responsibilities.

- ✠ Set up the chain so that members will know who will be calling them with the prayer requests and to whom they are to pass the requests along.

- ✠ Screen all prayer requests to make sure that they are appropriate for the Prayer Chain, and that there is either a clear time limit for the prayers or that there is a way to follow up to determine when prayers should cease.

- ✠ Keep track of what the Prayer Chain is currently praying for, and inform the chain when prayers are no longer required.

- ✠ Gather the members of the chain together from time to time so that they can: pray together; get to know each other; share their experiences; and share suggested changes in how the chain might operate.

Suggestions on Procedure

- ‡ When a prayer request is received it should be initially passed to the coordinator, who will then telephone or otherwise communicate it to the first person in the chain.
- ‡ If the first person cannot be reached and there is urgency in the situation then the next person on the chain is contacted.
- ‡ That person will then pass the request to the next person on the chain, and so on until the end of the chain is reached. If the next person on the chain is not available then that person is skipped and the following person on the chain is contacted.
- ‡ The last person in the chain then informs the coordinator of the message he/she has received to ensure that the message went down the chain correctly, and if anybody on the chain has been skipped. The coordinator can then make contact with the skipped person.
- ‡ As each person receives the message he/she puts the person or situation into their personal prayers.
- ‡ Experience has shown that a chain which is longer than 6-8 people is cumbersome and messages often get delayed or mixed up.
- ‡ If there are more than 8 members in a prayer chain then it is desirable to have two or more branches in the chain, in which case the coordinator starts things off by phoning the first person in each branch of the chain.





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