

# Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

Volume 27, No. 5

Advent 2019

*Serving, Supporting, and Encouraging Prayer*

## *A Reflection and Prayer from National Director Paul Feheley*



As you read this you will look around and know that the Christmas season is in full tilt with decorations, carols and in all likelihood snow to make everything festive. As I write this from Toronto it is not yet Halloween but the stores are well into the commercial side of our Lord's birth. Oh that everyone would be so eager and ready for the birth of our Saviour!

My emphasis in the newsletter last year was to become the gift. This year I hope to get you to focus on giving yourself a gift and to consider why that might be important.

Few people I know will ever say around this season that they are not too busy. We spend much time shopping for others and making sure each person receives the perfect gift. Very often we pay a considerable price not only in the monetary value but also to our very selves. We get little sleep, any breaks we have are spent shopping and by Christmas day we are exhausted. This kind of living is a reflection of our lives throughout the year and an honest question we need to ask. Is this how much time and what we need to give ourselves to be our best. Part of the reality we face is that at its heart the substance of all relationships is the relationship we have with ourselves.

While admitting that Our Lord didn't have to buy a lot of Christmas presents (!) I do believe that he understood the need to give himself the gift of quiet time. How often do we see in the gospels occasions when Jesus went off by himself to rest, to recover, to pray, to be at one and in communion with his Father.

My hope this Christmas for you and for the benefit of those that you love is to give yourself the gift of knowing when you have had enough. To realize the need for rest and to allow prayer to permeate your heart, mind and soul uniquely. To be the one who prays and speaks words to God even if that is in the silence of your heart knowing that you are precious in the eyes of God.

On behalf of my family and the executive of the AFP may I wish you a Merry Christmas and encourage you to give yourself the gift that you need this Christmas.



## Current Work of the AFP Executive

*Val Kenyon, National Chair*

Recently, at our bi-monthly meeting of the Executive of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Canada, we had a discussion about the AFP resources available both online in an electronic format and in a print version available by contacting our hard-working resource coordinator Paul Dumbille. In a world where the speed with which news and information is ever accelerating and the formats in which it comes to us are endlessly evolving, the Executive tries to regularly review what we offer to ensure that we are continuing to serve those looking to access these resources. Always eager to continue developing a breadth of resources, we are always looking for feedback from you. To that end, may I suggest a simple Advent devotional for you as we head into this season of expectation? Why not take a moment to visit:

<http://anglicanprayer.org/index.php/resources/>

to consider just what resources are available online. Then select several to focus on during the weeks of Advent. Perhaps you are interested in learning more about **intercessory prayer**. You will find information on this at:

[http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Intercessory%20Prayer\\_2017.pdf](http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Intercessory%20Prayer_2017.pdf).

Perhaps learning how to make and use an Anglican rosary during this season of **Advent** would be a blessing. If this is the case you'll want to go to:

[http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Anglican%20Rosary\\_2017.pdf](http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Anglican%20Rosary_2017.pdf).

Are there **young ones** in your life? You might like to have some help teaching them about prayer. If this is the case please visit:

[http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Teaching%20Children%20to%20Pray\\_2017.pdf](http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/Teaching%20Children%20to%20Pray_2017.pdf).

Advent marks the beginning of a new Church year. Why not start the year off prayerfully. It will make all the difference.

We are so pleased to announce the addition of the Rev'd Jane Bourcet to the Executive of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Canada. Jane has served as the Diocesan Contact in the Diocese of Kootenay for several years and in September agreed to join the Executive.



**Welcome!**

***The Rev. Jane Bourcet joins AFP National Executive***

Jane is a retired priest in the Diocese of Kootenay, living in Vernon, BC. She has been involved in the Diocese of Kootenay Spiritual Development Committee for many years because of her deep passion for spirituality and desire to encourage others in their lives of faith. She is looking forward to being a part of the AFP's presence across Canada.



*People who have  
had any genuine  
spiritual experience  
always know they  
don't know. They  
are utterly  
humbled before  
mystery.*

*~Richard Rohr*

# Prayer Using a Labyrinth

*Paul Dumbrille*

If you or your church are looking for a new way of involving members of your congregation and others in the community in prayer, you might want to think about creating a prayer labyrinth. Labyrinths go back 5,000 years or more. Beginning in the Middle Ages, Christianity adopted the labyrinth as a symbol, changing its design and use to imbue it with specifically Christian meaning. For almost a thousand years there has been an identifiable Christian labyrinth tradition. It is an ideal spiritual tool that can be used to reach people who don't relate to the church as an institution or are not attracted to traditional worship services. While praying using a labyrinth is a personal experience, it also helps to build community and can be a wonderful public service to the wider community.

A labyrinth used for prayer is not to be confused with a maze. While a maze is meant to be a puzzle to be solved, a labyrinth has a deliberately designed pattern whereby one enters a clearly defined entrance and travels a recognizable path. Labyrinths can be put indoors on floors, or outdoors. Typical prayer labyrinths look like these:



When walking a labyrinth, you start at the one entrance and proceed towards the centre, staying on the path without going over any lines. Eventually you arrive at the centre. Once arriving at the centre, you stay in the centre for as long as you wish. When ready, you retrace your steps, eventually arriving at the place where you started.

There are three stages of walking the labyrinth: the journey inwards to the centre in which one leaves behind cares and woes; resting in the centre to receive inspiration; and journeying outwards to return to our lives with a new awareness. Praying using the labyrinth is essentially a way of meditating while moving slowly. It can be helpful to prepare before actually entering the labyrinth by calming the mind and asking for God's presence, as one might do in other forms of meditation. After emerging from the labyrinth, one might want to spend time giving thanks for God's presence and reflecting on what one has experienced.

Using a labyrinth for prayer is a form of personal meditation and devotion and is truly a tool for our times. It can help us find our way through the bewildering noise and constant change of our world. It provides the sacred space where the inner and outer worlds can commune, where the thinking mind, imaginative heart, and the voice of the Holy Spirit can flow together. It can provide a space to listen to our inner voice of wisdom and come to grips with our role as disciples of Christ. The labyrinth meets each person where they are and helps them to take the next step on their spiritual path. Because it is so personal, it is a spiritual practice that can be enjoyed by everyone.

# Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada)

NEW ADDRESS: PO Box 43021, London, ON N6J 0A7  
[www.anglicanprayer.org](http://www.anglicanprayer.org)



Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada)  
@AFP\_Canada

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[newsletter@anglicanprayer.org](mailto:newsletter@anglicanprayer.org)

Next Newsletter: Lent 2020  
Submission deadline: January 27, 2020



~ ~ ~ If prayer is asking for rain, faith is carrying an umbrella. ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ You are the only Bible some people may ever read. ~ ~ ~

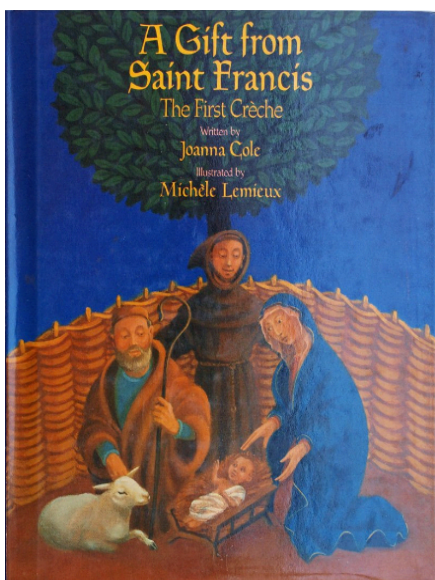
~ ~ ~ Courage is fear that has said its prayers. ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ A problem not worth praying about isn't worth worry about. ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. ~ ~ ~

## Book Review

***A Gift from Saint Francis: The First Crèche***  
Written by Joanna Cole; Illustrated by Michèle Lemieux  
*reviewed by Val Kenyon*



Did you know that 800 years ago people did not celebrate Christmas with special customs as we do now? But St Francis believed that Jesus' birthday should be made special and so on one moonlit winter night, Francis would find a way to see the Christmas story with his own eyes and in doing so, bring this miraculous story to life for all those around him.

While perhaps we are just a bit ahead of ourselves for the season, if you have a young one in your life, you will want to add *A Gift from Saint Francis: The First Crèche* written by Joanna Cole and beautifully illustrated by Michèle Lemieux to your personal library.