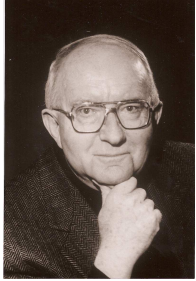


Anglican Fellowship OF **PRAYER** Canada



AFP-C NEWSLETTER - Vol. 21, No. 2

SUMMER 2013



THE HEALER **HERBERT O'DRISCOLL**

She was sitting in her doorway weeping, the little one in her arms, when a neighbour came running. A healer whose name had become a byword in the province to the south had been seen in the area. She knew what she had to do.

Two days later she intercepted the group. At first she kept her distance. Eventually one of them approached her. He asked her what she wanted. She told him. His voice hardened. The healer was not accepting any requests. He was exhausted and badly needed rest.

Desperation drove her. She kept pace behind them. She kept calling out her need, trying to catch the ear of the healer.

Toward evening they stopped. One of them again approached her. She steeled herself for what might come, but this time it was different. The healer would see her. She burst out crying and ran towards him, throwing herself before the seated figure. She could see immediately that he was indeed exhausted.

Eyes glazed with weariness He looked at her. A voice hoarse from dealing with crowds said quietly, "*You know of course that my work is over there.*" A hand pointed to the southeast. She nodded, aware only that he was at least talking to her. She gasped out her need – the fever, her journey south, her fear for the child, her certainty that if he chose he could help.

There was silence. He looked away from her toward the distant sea. They could here the booming of the Rosh Hanykra grotto where the ocean thundered through the rocks. She kept silent, fearful that her link with him would be broken. When he did turn back to her and speak, his words at first terrified her because they seemed to speak of refusal. "*It is not fair*", he said quietly, "*to take the children's food and cast it to the dogs*".

She felt a moment of utter despair. Only when their eyes met did she see a kindness that hinted of invitation, an invitation to her to respond. For a moment she couldn't think, then she

- continued on page 2 -



Reflections on the 2013 Joint Assembly

Together for the Love of the World,
from a Display Booth member's perspective:
Esther Jackson



Prior to the opening service the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer team set up a display booth to feature Prayer Resources, and to provide an opportunity to meet with delegates during the week. We also set up a Prayer Room where a prayer vigil was maintained, and where others could come for quiet prayer.



L. to R.: Rev. Gregory Mercer, Paul Dumbrille, Esther Jackson, Janet Stevens, Win Mizon, and Anne Moore

The following offers a few glimpses of my experience of looking in on the events of the 2013 Joint Assembly. I was moved and inspired by the large inukshuk, a symbol of finding place and direction, which was central to the opening Eucharist. It was dismantled during the service.

At our AFP display booth, located

-continued on page 2 -



THE HEALER

- continued from page 1 -

heard herself say *"But even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table"*.

The tired face broke into a smile. A hand was extended. A promise of healing was given.

She would journey north again, this time in hope. She would see the village, see a hand waving. She would be met by arms that bore her smiling child.

Perhaps she asked for news of the healer as the months went by and her child grew. Perhaps she would hear the news of his death. Perhaps she would come to know of the wondrous way a vast world was coming to call him Lord.

But there was one thing she could never know. She would never know that the image she had blurted out in desperation, the image of hungry mouths scrambling for crumbs under a family table, would become the central image for the loveliest and most valued of all prayers far in the future.

She would never know that generation after generation, century after century, millions would fall on their knees, their voices echoing her voice, seeking the presence of the Healer who once looked into her eyes and who would become the Healer of the World.

*"We are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under thy table,
But Thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy ..."*

This she would never know.
But we know,
And we kneel.
And we are fed.

Herbert O'Driscoll



- continued from page 1 -

between Threshold Ministries, (formerly Church Army) and the Alpha Booth, we found ourselves in a mini community, sharing ideas, program information, connections, and the events of our lives. As the week went by, these connections extended to leaders of other displays, as well as those who stopped by our booth. I was particularly pleased to make contact with Cynthia Patterson in the Suicide Prevention Program. At General Synod 2010 Bishop Gary Woolsey, then the National Director of AFP, spoke to Cynthia about our common concern for finding prayers to support families of suicide victims, and prayers of healing for those at risk of suicide. Bishop Gary has written some prayers, and I will be forwarding them to Cynthia.



Two of the visitors to the display were Rev. Ken Kitchekusik and his wife Rubeena. They knew Bishop Gary Woolsey when he was a priest pilot in Northern Manitoba. Ken had fond memories of carrying the Woolsey boys on his shoulders to go to buy candy. Ken spoke during the Synod, and was part of the leadership to create the new diocese formerly part of the diocese of Keewatin, now to be supported by and working with the Diocese of Rupert's Land.

Each day of Synod the Anglican Foundation had a question of the day, and prizes to be won. One question was: What four projects does the Foundation's 'Kids helping Kids' support? In resolving the answer we learned that this ministry is to:

Help kids with homework after school

Provide kids with breakfast before school

Give kids a chance to go to summer camp or a choir school

And Caring for kids with a terminal illness

Impressed with the vision of helping children, some of the people at our display offered financial support to this program.

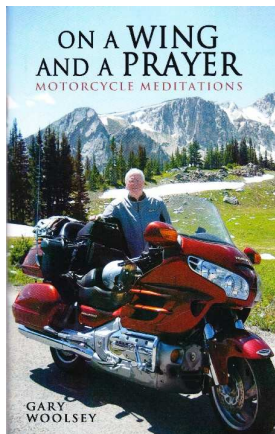
At the "Witness on the Hill" the National Youth led a service on Parliament Hill to focus on the Right to Water, the need for water conservation, and the water crisis faced by indigenous people, and many others around the world. We remembered the commitment of our baptism, shared in the prayers facing the four directions, and left with the blessing of the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, and ELCIC National Bishop, Susan Johnson.

For me the final Ah hah moment was the worship of the closing Eucharist, with the vitality and energy of drummers, the sung dramatic presentation of the gospel, the restoration of the Inukshuk, and the challenge of the Primate to **"Get up, Get Out, and Get Lost"** in the celebration of Creation, in caring for one another, in caring for the broken, and suffering, and in concern for the environment.

On a Wing and a Prayer MOTORCYCLE MEDITATIONS

By GARY WOOLSEY

"Several years ago Gary started making notes and jotting down ideas for a Motorcycle Meditation book – merging his two great loves – ministry and riding. But it took a sudden and unexpected life crisis to put his plan into action. On December 27, 2012 Gary was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumour. After surgery on December 30, he was immobilized on his left side and confined to a bed. On February 17, 2014 Gary moved to a hospice, not knowing how long he had to live out his life. Time was now of the essence. He has written the meditations on his iPad, using one finger on his only good hand. This is the fulfillment of his dream. We hope that these meditations will be a blessing and an inspiration to all his fellow bikers!"



--Marie Woolsey--

On a Wing and a Prayer MOTORCYCLE MEDITATIONS Book Review By Herb O'Driscoll

There is an old Shaker song that tells us...

*'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free
'Tis a gift to come down where you want to be,
And when you come down in the place just right,
You're then in the valley of pure delight.*

I never realized that those lines would be as good a song as any to sing while riding through a beautiful landscape on a well running powerful motor bike! However, to realize that this was indeed true, all I had to do was to pick up my new copy of ON A WING AND A PRAYER – Motorcycle Meditations by Bishop Gary Woolsey, and to start reading.



As I did begin to read Gary's book, the words that came to me for these pages are - deeply scriptural, richly pastoral and eminently readable. The author begins always with a scripture passage, reflects about it in general terms of daily life, and then applies the thought to the world of the motor bike enthusiast.

Again as I read I could not help thinking how easily and vividly this material carries Christian faith into lives that might not otherwise feel drawn to the institutional church but who recognize down-to-earth wisdom when they are offered it! What is especially valuable about these insights is that because motor bike riding in groups requires trust, discipline and care, not just of oneself but for those around you, we are constantly given insights about living and working in community, with the many demands this makes and the many satisfactions it can give.

Gary, thank you from many of us. Now – more please!

Herb O'Driscoll – who long ago in his first curacy in Ireland had a light motor bike on which he and Paula felt the wind and the freedom – and the Spirit!

On a Wing and a Prayer MOTORCYCLE MEDITATIONS

By GARY WOOLSEY

Reviewed By Mark Perrin, AFP Web Coordinator.

Here is a book of thirty prayer meditations written by an amazing man from his bed in a hospice with the use of only one hand.

The book contains meditations that Gary developed over several years while riding. Each begins with a scripture quote, followed by an interpretation for Christian life, then an interpretation for bikers and completes with a prayer. As a fellow biker, I get the analogies and I believe all readers will find them relevant in their lives in some way.



Gary's intention is for the reader to complete one meditation per day. They are short and allow time to ponder the correlation to the reader's life. The book is laid out with space for taking notes during the mediation.

Gary could write the book because of the depth of his spirituality and relationship with God and his awareness of God in all of life. He is a retired Diocesan Bishop of the Anglican Church, former National Director of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer and has been a passionate biker since 1999. He initiated the Bikers' Sunday at St. Peter's and the Blessing of the Wheels service at St Martin's in Calgary. Gary was diagnosed with an aggressive brain cancer just after Christmas and has been in a hospice since February. His second book is on the way and will be reviewed in a future edition.

At the moment, the best way to purchase a copy is to email Marie Woolsey at newoolsey42@gmail.com or phone her at 403-251-9569.

Books sell for \$10. Postage and handling on 1 book is \$2.50, 2 books \$3.50 and 3 books \$4.00. Any number above that becomes parcel post and will depend on weight and destination. GST is included.

Payment is by cash, cheque or money order made out to Marie Woolsey. Direct deposit can be made to the email address newoolsey42@gmail.com.

About the Author

Gary Woolsey, B.A., B.Th., D.D., aka "the Silver Fox"

Born in Brantford, Ontario in 1942, Gary graduated in Theology from Huron College in London, Ontario in 1967. As a priest-pilot, he ministered to 25 remote native villages in Northern Ontario and Manitoba; as a teacher-priest, he ministered and taught in Norway House, Manitoba; as the Bishop of Athabasca, he oversaw 20 parishes in northern Alberta; and as a parish priest/Bishop, he served at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Calgary, Alberta. After his retirement in 2002, he continued to lead conferences and retreats as well as being the National Director of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. For the past 15 years, motorcycle touring has been his passion.





MOTORCYCLE MEDITATION 1

By Gary Woolsey

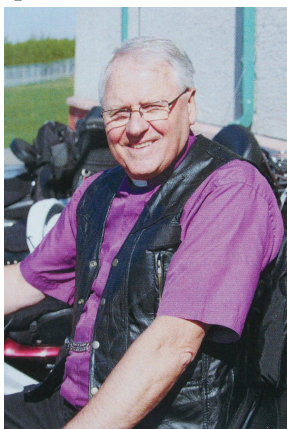
I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. (Proverbs 4:11 NIV)

I was thinking about the life of the new Christian. When we start our journey we would like some smooth straight paths. That may involve settling into a church and enjoying beautiful worship but not taking on any major responsibilities. We might even be praying that no one will ask us to do anything! This is a real 'honeymoon' period –no responsibilities- just being on the receiving end.

Biking can have a similar beginning. I remember getting my first touring bike, a 1982 Gold Wing. I can still picture heading out of Calgary on a smooth stretch of highway with a big smile on my face. Wisdom told me to just enjoy the straight stretches and get comfortable with my bike. No sharp turns. Soon you are riding with other more experienced bikers. You rely on them to plan the trips, to be the Leaders and the Tail Gunners, and to help you with any issues that may arise. All you want to do as a new rider is to enjoy the ride! The same goes for the co-rider. It was with fear and trepidation that I took Marie on her first ride – I drove the speed limit – maybe slightly under – and chose a road with only gentle curves, and she loved it!

In both our spiritual and biking lives we need to mature into greater responsibility and leadership, but as a new Christian or biker it's okay to just enjoy the ride for awhile.

PRAYER: *Lord, help me to follow You and to experience the true joy of your wisdom, and lead me into greater responsibilities as You feel I am ready.*



Note: At the Joint Assembly, July 3 – 7, 2013, we had some requests for palliative care related prayers. With this in mind, I have included in this newsletter, a few prayers for those with prolonged, chronic or terminal illness. We would like to add others to our resources, so please send us your suggestions for palliative care related prayers to:

**Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Canada
P.O. Box 78084, NEPEAN, ON K2E 1B1**

From a Hospice Bed - May 1, 2013

By Gary Woolsey

"a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot," (Ecclesiastes 3:2 NIV)

We live in a changing world. As someone said, there is one thing in life that is certain and that is change. Every day, many are being born and many are dying. Maybe the dying are making room for those who are being born. That would make dying a gift to someone else.

We do not know when our time to die will be, and I think that is a good thing. Someone asked me "do you have a bucket list? (Things you hope to do before you kick the bucket.) I thought about this and even reflected on it with Marie. We came to the conclusion that we have had a wonderful life and did some amazing trips, so if we never did a cruise it was not the end of the world. So I am feeling quite content and counting the many blessings we have experienced.

Something I dreamed of doing was writing motorcycle meditations for bikers but I never seemed to find the time to do it. So it took a brain tumour to give me time in a hospice bed to make it happen and cross it off my bucket list. The brain tumour also forced us to get our wills in order, something we had been putting off.

Then there are things that as a couple, you divide up, i.e., I left the cooking to Marie but I always did our taxes. So this year Marie had to learn how to do our taxes with the computer program. Now I am not advocating that death is the way to deal with unfinished tasks or that death is the way to learn a new skill. Yet coping with the change from living to dying, can allow time for some things to occur. I am sad when I think of those sudden and tragic deaths that do not allow time to deal with unfinished business and for expressing fond farewells. Maybe what I want to say is that adapting to change can bring unexpected surprises.

Prayer: *Lord, my time to die has allowed me to connect with family & friends in a much deeper way. I will continue to use the gifts You have given me. "It's not over 'till it's over!"*

Editor's Note:

Gary has been very open about his journey in life and as he faces death. What a blessing, especially to those of us who know him and have followed his journey on Facebook. His ministry here on earth isn't finished. We can all learn from his changing journey from living to dying. Thank you Gary!

Please keep Gary and the Woolsey family in your prayers.

Win Mizon



Diocese of Toronto

Tony Day

Each year the prayer committee has a quiet day at a member's home. We gather between 9:30 and 10:00 for coffee and chat and conclude around 2:30 having stopped for

lunch. The quiet day has a theme, which is chosen by the leader, this year it was Stuart, who generally offers three talks followed by time to reflect individually and quietly on questions and prayer suggestions prepared by the leader. For some this means going for a walk, for others sitting on a log; you can use your imagination of where a place of quietness would be for you.

The purpose of the day is that we get to know one another better in a non meeting situation and hopefully deepen our personal relationship with the Lord.

This year God really surprised us. Let me tell you about it.

This year our leader's theme focused on the transformation of his personal life and his faith. Over a number of years his life and work had become dark and meaningless. He drank too much, argued too much and found no satisfaction in anything. On a business trip he confined himself to his hotel room whenever he could. In such despair for the first time in his life he knelt down and prayed saying simply, "God, if you are really there, show me." In that instant, he knew Jesus was right there in the room with him. The risen Jesus, very real, very present, He said, "I am here. What's going on?"

That question became our question for our first time of quiet. You might like to stop reading this and consider the same question yourself: Jesus says "I am here; what's going on?"

The next address described the changes that had taken place in his life as a result of this encounter with Jesus. Stuart shared many gems that had been part of his transformation and those 'gems' became the focus of our next quiet time. Which ones had spoken to us and why? Has there been a Gem in your spiritual life?

The third address dealt with being a fool for Jesus. For our leader it was his encounter with 'the man who lived under the bridge'. As we listened we too were invited to remember when we had done something out of character because the Lord seemed to be leading us this way. It really afforded us the opportunity to reflect on a time when we helped someone only to discover on hindsight, they were ministering to us not we to them. Again we had a time of quiet followed by sharing. Can you recall such a time in your life?

Scripture describes us as being transformed. These simple but profound talks touched us deeply and in their quiet way transformed each of us and deepened our relationship with Jesus. I like to think the Lord was pleased with what took place that day.

The Diocese of Huron

WHEN PRAYING IS A CHALLENGE



Saturday, October 5, 2013

9:00a.m. to 2:30 p.m.*

St Michael & All Angels

397 Springbank Drive, London

Led by Sister Sue, SSJD

*We all have times when praying is a challenge,
no time, no energy, no interest.*

*Join us as we consider
how to meet these obstacles to prayer.*

A freewill offering will be taken.

Drinks and snacks provided.

Please bring your lunch.

**Co-sponsored by the Associates of
the Sisterhood of St John the Divine
and the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Huron)**
To register please e-mail: vkkenyon@rogers.com
or call 519-854-9998



SAVE THE DATE:

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2014 Bishop's Prayer Conference
Developing and Sustaining Praying Communities
With the Rev Canon Dr Todd Townshend

* doors open at 9:00 for coffee, fellowship and book browsing;
program starts at 10:00

Heavenly Father, sanctify this time of sickness that it may become a blessing for N, and in your good time restore HIM/HER to health that SHE/HE may spend the rest of HIS/HER life in your service and finally dwell with you in the fullness of eternal life. *Amen*

Source: Church of the Province of Southern Africa. An Anglican Prayer Book 1989 (Jeppesstown: Harper Collins, 1989), 497

Lord Jesus Christ, by your cross and passion you redeemed the world: to all who face long continued suffering grant patience, courage, and an unshakeable trust in your love; help them to offer their weakness with thanksgiving to you; strengthen them to go on seeking your perfect will, that having endured with you they may also live and reign with you, now and forever. *Amen*

Source: Church of the Province of Southern Africa. An Anglican Prayer Book 1989 (Jeppesstown: Harper Collins, 1989), 497

New Diocesan Representatives

Diocese of Moosonee The Rev. Iris Montague



Iris will be celebrating her tenth anniversary of being ordained to the priesthood this coming September. She ministered in the parishes of Moosonee and Moose Factory, ON, then Mistissini, QC before moving back to her home in South Porcupine. She now ministers part time to the parishes of Chapleau and Foleyet. This entails quite a bit of travelling, but it is worth it.

Iris is married with a grown family. Her husband took an early retirement to travel with her. Her Facebook page is Iris Robertson Montague.

Diocese of Brandon

The Rev. Laura Marie Piotrowicz



Laura is a priest serving a five-point parish grouping, on the Manitoba/Saskatchewan border about two hours north of Brandon. She says: "It's a marvelous rural parish with some truly great people." She already has a support group of folks there, and has been extended prayer support from John Dolloff's former parish.

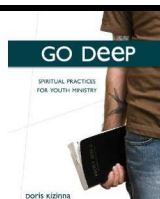
Laura is a praying person. She has said, "Amazing things can happen when we pray with and for one another." She is involved with the PWRDF and Creation Matters Team, blogs for The Community, dabbles in youth ministry and does some writing. She's written some of her own original prayers and liturgies, led workshops on spiritual practices and prayer life, and she's served in a variety of contexts as chaplain and prayer partner.

In her free time she is usually outdoors somewhere with her dogs, reading a new book with a good cup of tea, or traveling the world learning something new.



O God our heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: Grant to this thy servant grace to desire only thy most holy will; that, whether living or dying, HE/SHE may be thine; for his sake who loved us and gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Source: Anglican Church of Canada, *The Book of Common Prayer* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), 579



Book Review

Win Mizon

"Go Deep Spiritual Practices For Youth Ministry" By Doris E. Kizinna

I came across this book recently and feel it is an excellent resource for both Youth leaders and for the youth or young adults to whom they minister. Doris Kizinna has been involved with youth ministry in the United Church, either as a participant or as a leader for over 20 years.

In her introduction to "Go Deep", Doris Kizinna writes, "*Youth ministry is many things. It is the vibrant energy of a room full of teenagers. It is learning how to live in community and be a place for people to come wholly as they are and be accepted. It is fun, games, wacky adventures, laughter, and coming to know God. It is teaching and learning what it takes to be a person of faith. It is becoming more aware of how ordinary living is infused with the presence of God. It is coming to know how your life is connected with the life of Jesus and how the living Christ affects your life today.*"

"Your task as leader is to listen and discover what it is youth are seeking and then try and fill that need."

"This book will take you through practices that ask you to go deep into your own motivations, calling, and leadership. It will also provide you with simple practices of prayer to use with your own circle of youth. It contains

- *Reflections and questions about ways to think about your own faith, beliefs, and spiritual practices*
- *Practical tools and directions on how to set up spiritual practices for youth*
- *Practices of prayer, presence, and worship that can be incorporated into your youth ministry gatherings."*

Doris Kizinna encourages youth leaders to find ways to practice God in their own lives, to let go of fear, to learn by doing and then reflecting on the experience. She encourages us to go into the dark and the light places, to be who we really are in their midst.

"Don't be afraid to go deep into the love and mystery of God and the loving friendship in Christ. Don't be afraid to build a community of faith with joy and a sense of your own call."

Go Deep by Doris E. Kizinna. Copyright © 2009 Doris E. Kizinna, CopperHouse, an imprint of Wood Lake Publishing Inc. Used by permission.

Holy One, I choose life. I choose openness. I choose beauty, and faith. I choose to create. In all the things I intend for my life and the life of the world, oh God hear my prayer, and in your love and understanding, answer. Amen.

Source: Go Deep by Doris E. Kizinna. Copyright © 2009 Doris E. Kizinna, CopperHouse, an imprint of Wood Lake Publishing Inc. Used by permission.

Children's Ministry Baptism

Elizabeth Short



With a new school year fast approaching I am reminded of a lovely, true story a friend of mine shared. Each day as her young children headed out to school, a woman she knew would bend over each of them, trace a cross on their foreheads and say, "Remember your Baptism." With these words, in their ears, they would head out the door.

Our Baptism sets each of us on a journey, and as we set out on life's varied journeys, we would do well to "remember our baptisms." This simple yet powerful statement delivered to the children each day reminded them that they belonged to Jesus and that wherever they went, Jesus went with them. It told them *who* they were and *whose* they were. This was a path chosen for them by loving parents.

It may be that your children will require some instruction about baptism, maybe you do, too! In some homes, the anniversary of each child's baptism is remembered with thanksgiving, and provides an opportunity to remind each member of the family what it means to be baptized.

There are simple ways to talk about baptism with our children. If they have attended a Baptism, talk about it. Discuss with them what water is used for, and why it is so important. Then talk about stories about water in the bible. The very first story in the very first book of Genesis is about the spirit of God hovering over the water and of a created order coming out of that. There is the story of the parting of the Red Sea, and of Moses getting water from the rock. There is the story of Jesus' Baptism. And there are stories of walking on water, calming storms and yielding abundance from water. You could discuss why water is used in Baptism (a cleansing, a re-birth or re-creation). Through our Baptism we strive to turn away from bad things and turn to Christ and what he would want for our lives.

Baptism is about belonging. Through Baptism we belong to Christ and are members of the local and worldwide Christian family. You can discuss with your children what that might imply for them, for you and for your family together.

During Baptism, water is poured on our heads three times (in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Then a cross is made on our foreheads, as an outward sign of God's inward Grace. Finally, a candle is presented with the words, "let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven". There is a lot here for some interesting conversations! Through the Anglican Church (go to good old Google), there are some good resources that teach about Baptism, including how to talk to children about it. Of course you can always discuss it with your Priest and read over the service of Baptism in the Book of Alternative Services.

This need not become complicated. Over the months and years the children will learn more as they are able to

understand. What is important to know for now is that they are loved by Christ and belong to him, along with other Christians. They have been set upon a special life journey and they do not have to journey alone. They can have this assurance and the assurance that you are praying they will not feel alone and that they will feel this special love as they walk out of the house and into the big world. Knowing this can affect how they handle various situations and relate to people throughout the day. Just as the cross was re-traced on their foreheads each day, so were the words imprinted in their minds and sealed in their hearts.

The friend who told me about this family's ritual lost her husband. At his funeral the seven-year-old girl asked her to bend over. With her little finger, she traced a cross on my friend's forehead and said, "Remember your Baptism."

Gary's Poem

(as posted on Facebook)

There was a point in the hospice
when the hand of death
Seemed to be within my grasp,
Which would allow me to leave this world behind.
But now I no longer feel that hand.
I wonder if it lurks behind my new bursts of energy.

Yet, why do I wish that I could feel the hand of
death, again?

So that it would end my repeated daily hospice
routine:

wake-up call, pre-care meds, wash-up, News on TV,
check emails and Facebook with my iPod touch, 8
am meds, breakfast, work on my iPad,
accept visitors, lunch, accept afternoon visitors if it is
nice, then into the hoist to my Broda chair and enjoy
the sun on the patio.

Yet even when I think of my hospice routine I realize
that

I was living a routine before my tumour:
wake-up, shower, brush teeth, shave, breakfast, read-
the newspaper, sit in my meditation chair,
Write in my journal/diary, use a variety of prayer
booklets and spiritual books, then to my computer to
check emails.

So I cannot call on Death to remove routines in my
life,

because one would only be replaced by another.

So can I just accept the fact that my time to depart
the bounds of this earth
has not yet come?

- Gary Woolsey -

Spirit & Religion

Paul Dumbrille



These days when people are asked what their religion or faith tradition is, we often hear something like, "I'm not religious, but I am spiritual". When I have heard this, or some variation of it, I have often asked myself, "What are they really saying, and what is its significance to Christians and the Church?" "Spirit" is a

rather vague and overused word these days, and yet people are clearly differentiating it from "religion".

In his book, *A Rumour of God: Rekindling Belief in an Age of Disenchantment*, Robert Sibley offers ideas, insights and practices for finding spiritual awareness in the everyday. He writes,

"Religion" derives from the Latin word *religare*, meaning to "bind fast" or "contain" or "tie back."

Etymological dictionaries define religion as a means of establishing a relationship between the individual and whatever he/she regards as the ultimate nature of reality.

The word "spirit" comes from the Latin *spiritus*. The Latin, in turn, is a translation of *pneuma*, the Greek word for "breath." *Pneuma* refers to the breath of life, that which gives life to the physical body. It also had connotations of courage and vigour. The philosopher G.W.F. Hegel used the word, "Spirit, or *Geist*, to refer to the highest mode of existence or the highest principle of life. "Spirit", in this sense, has to do with that which animates or gives life its purpose.

Spirit and religion come together when our understanding of life's purpose and meaning is articulated - or contained - in institutional rituals, rules and conventions. You are being religious when you are attempting to articulate, by whatever means - church rituals, pilgrimage, prayer, poetry etc. - your understanding of the 'ultimate reality' that gives your life meaning and purpose.

When someone says they are "spiritual" and not "religious", perhaps they are saying that their experience of "church", or religion, does not give their life the meaning and purpose they are seeking. If this is true, then, as Christians, our challenge is to practise, present, and articulate our 'ultimate reality' - how God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, gives life meaning and purpose.

The mission of Anglican Fellowship of Prayer is to encourage people to pray, always remembering that prayer, in its many forms, is the means by which we encounter God. This leads to understanding our 'ultimate reality', and gives life meaning and purpose.

God of the present moment, God who in Jesus stills the storm and soothes the frantic heart; bring hope and courage to N as **HE/SHE/THEY** wait(s) in uncertainty. Bring hope that You will make **HIM/HER/THEM** equal to whatever lies ahead. Bring **HIM/HER/THEM** courage to endure what cannot be avoided, for your will is health and wholeness; you are God, and we need you. *Amen*

Source: The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, A New Zealand Prayer Book (Collins, n.p., 1989) 747

Lord God almighty, your thoughts are not our thoughts neither are your ways our ways. We stand in awe and humility before the mystery of suffering. Grant N the faith and courage to accept **HIS/HER** suffering in the spirit of Christ, and the grace to offer it in union with his passion to be used according to your eternal purposes. Fill **HIM/HER** with your peace and support **HIM/HER** with your love, that **HE/SHE** may give glory to your Name; through Jesus Christ your Son our Saviour. *Amen*

Source: Church of the Province of Southern Africa. An Anglican Prayer Book 1989 (Jeppestown: Harper Collins, 1989)

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