

ALONGSIDERS PROGRAM

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada)

*Releasing the power of God through the prayers
of those cut off from the mainstream of
activities by illness, handicap or isolation.*

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Canada
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THE ALONGSIDERS PROGRAM

Alongsiders are primarily shut-ins, handicapped, elderly or isolated persons who minister to the Church by prayer. The idea for this ministry comes from I Timothy 5:5 and from Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition, which notes that widows are "instituted for prayer". If widows, why not widowers, elderly persons, and others cut off from the mainstream of activities by illness, handicap or isolation?

Alongsiders are those who by their praise, thanksgiving and prayer release the power of God. Their intercessions support and encourage others. Where prayers are offered, action results (Acts 12: 11 & 12). Alongsiders, too, will benefit from their new purpose and responsibility in the parish.

Alongsiders' offerings of praise and prayer are of infinite worth. The results, though sometimes hidden, are eternal. The ministry of prayer is the Alongsiders' gift to the Church.

Preparing Alongsiders

In preparing a person to become an Alongsider, the priest or parish prayer representative should build on the person's present prayer life and practices, and at the same time try to widen their horizons a little. Help them to see their prayer

ministry as a calling to serve God in this special way. Intercession for the parish needs, as they are told to them by their contract person, is at the heart of the program.

Specifics of Implementing Alongsiders

Introduction: For the Alongsiders program to work, there must be an ongoing commitment on the part of the parish to have active, continuing, and regular contact with the participants in the program.

There must be an individual or group whose responsibility is to maintain effective contact with Alongsiders. Unless such a commitment and such a structure exist, the program will not work. One thing shut-ins do not need is to be buoyed up by the potential of this shared ministry and then let down because of lack of effective follow-up. One plan that seems to work well is teaming up an active person with each shut-in, so that regular communication can take place.

Structural Possibilities: Some parishes have a primary commitment to working with shut-ins through visitation programs to nursing homes. This is done by clergy and/or lay ministers who have this as their ongoing ministry. In other cases there may be a group that would welcome Alongsiders as a primary concern.

Affirming the Shut-in: As is obvious from the tenor of this program, it is founded on the belief that Christian people who can no longer actively participate in worship or other Church programs can pray. Their intercessory prayers can become a major source of spiritual power. Intercession can become their primary ministry. Thereby they become a vital part of the parish as they work, through their prayers, "alongside" the rest of the congregation. If potential participants can see how much their prayers are needed, they can be motivated to become Alongsiders.

THE SHUT-IN'S GIFT

*To all those who must stay within
And cannot get about,
Your prayers can open many doors
for those who are without.*

*For those more active in the world
Entwined in time's dread clutch,
Beseeching God on their behalf,
It can accomplish much..*

*Out in the world, as life goes on
So many are distressed,
Whose pain and fear, distractions too,
Can through your prayers be blessed.*

*So give the gift that you can give
Because you have the time;
To intercede for those who toil
It is the gift sublime.*

Contacting the Shut-ins: One possible step-by-step method of approaching potential Alongsiders is as follows:

1) Call the prospective "pray-er" on the phone and ask, "May I come and talk to you? The Church has a plan that I think you can help us with".

2) In chatting, speak about the value of prayer and the need for intercessory prayer. Jesus gave us an example (Luke 22:32). We are told to pray for others (I Tim. 2:1; James 5:14, 16).

3) You can say, "I like to think that God can use us as channels between himself and the problem we are praying about. With our prayers we can stay alongside a person or problem, and God will use our prayers",

4) When you are able to visit and discuss the program in detail with the prospective Alongsider, you can say, "If you are willing to undertake this job, you will be appointed by the Rector. A friend from the parish will be in touch with you on an ongoing basis. You will be supplied with the names of people needing prayer and of situations needing prayer. You will also be told how your prayers have been answered, when this is possible."

5) Give the Alongsider the kit provided for this program, and go over it carefully with him/her. Include in the kit a list of current prayer requests. Update this list regularly, by phone, letter or a visit. Also include a Bible reading booklet, the Diocesan Prayer Cycle, the parish list, and anything else that you feel will be helpful to this ministry.

6) Answer any questions the Alongsider may have. Give the Alongsider your phone number.

7) If the original contact has been made by a parish visitor, the priest should be told, so that he can follow up with a commissioning, if desired.

8) Let the parish know that this person has become an Alongsider and that his/her name is being added to the Alongsider wall chart.

Mechanics of Implementation: The person or group responsible for the Alongsiders program in the parish needs to think through the methods that will be used to:

- Provide the Alongsiders regularly with prayer requests;
- Inform the Alongsiders of answers to prayer and other pertinent information;
- Renew their subscription to daily Bible study materials; and
- Answer any questions the Alongsider may have.

Financing: The cost to the parish of the Alongsiders program would normally consist only of the following:

- The purchase of an Alongsider packet for each participant.
- Renewal of the subscription for whatever daily Bible study the Alongsider may want.
- Anything else furnished to the Alongsider by the parish as a part of the program.
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Parish Awareness of the Alongsiders: When the program is first introduced in the parish, it is important that it be explained in detail. The parish as a whole must be kept aware of the Alongsider program, of the people taking part in it, and of the contribution they are making to the Church. Ways of doing this could include:

- The wall chart for recording the names and residences of participants can be placed in a highly visible location in the Church.
- News of a new person becoming an Alongsider can be reported in the parish newsletter.
- Alongsiders can be mentioned in an appropriate way during the intercessions in Church services.



THE COMMISSIONING FOR LAY MINISTRY

As an ALONGSIDER in the Diocese of _____.

The candidates to be commissioned will come forward to be presented to the Parish Priest.*

(Priest's name), these persons wish to receive authorization to perform a special ministry as Alongsiders in the Diocese of _____.

Priest: My friends, in the name of God we propose now to give authorization to perform a lay ministry as Alongsiders to our well beloved in Christ; and we ask you to join together with us in prayer to Almighty God, that he would give them, thus commissioned, grace to perform faithfully the ministry to which they are being called. Are you willing to accept this ministry?

Candidates: I am willing, God being my helper.

Priest: Let us pray.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Priest: (N) I hereby authorize you to perform a lay ministry

of prayers as an Alongsider in the parish of _____,
in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you, that in this and
all things you may do God's will, in the service of His
kingdom.

The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

Priest: Let us pray.


Almighty God, look with favour upon these persons who have
been commissioned to serve Christ in this ministry of prayer.
Give them courage, patience and vision. Strengthen us all in
our vocation of witness to the world and of service to others;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

* When Alongsiders are unable to be present at a church
service, the Priest will conduct the commissioning at their
home, possibly involving others.



For further information or pamphlets please contact your AFP
Diocesan Representative or
the Resources Representative for AFP Canada.

Internet Web Site: www.anglicanprayer.org

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