



First Friday of the Month Call to Prayer March 2017

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26 ESV

Welcome to our March 2017 First Friday Call to Prayer. Our aim is to provide you with teaching that we trust will be an encouragement to you. We will also provide you with praise items and prayer requests coming from within ANiC, ACNA and the Anglican Communion.

We encourage you to set aside **the first Friday, March 3rd**, as a day of prayer and fasting for the Church in these critical days, ideally gathering with other believers in your parish or region for corporate prayer at some point in the day.

Collect for Ash Wednesday/Lent

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Why Almighty God Loves Prayer

“My kids won’t talk to me, especially since they became teenagers. They just kind of grunt a reply when I ask how their day went. It’s so hard”. During my years of retreat centre work and pastoral ministry, I heard this statement many, many times from parents who were aching because of the loss of “connectedness” that they felt they’d had when their children were younger.

Common advice to such hurting parents goes something like this: *“Well, it’s just a stage they’re going through – part of exerting their own individuality and independence. They’ll get over it when they hit their twenties.”* Not much real consolation for mums or dads who are seeking interdependence with their children and a two-way flow of communication that conveys a level of love and vulnerability. Unrealistic expectations, experts would say; not in today’s culture of cyberspace isolation and broken primary relationships.

Have you stopped recently to reconsider that God is a parent, too? So much of Jesus’ ministry on earth was to *“reveal the Father”*. When the disciples requested Jesus to show them the Father, His reply was, *“If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father”*. *“I only do what I see the Father doing . . . my food and drink is to do the will of the Father who sent Me.”*

Of all of Jesus’ stories, the Lost Son best reveals the heart of God as a Father. You know the parable in Luke 15 of the young man who demanded his inheritance from his father and squandered it, only to realize later what a fool he had been, for even his father’s servants lived a better existence than he was experiencing. But, today our focus is not the penitent son, but the loving father, who did not refuse his son’s initial demands, even though he may have had serious reservations. Let’s look at the Father who, perhaps daily, stood gazing down the road, hoping to catch a glimpse of the boy who had left.

On the day that he did return, Eugene Peterson in the Message describes the scene this way; *“When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him”*. Why was his heart pounding? Not from running, for the text would suggest that his heart was pounding even before he began to run. No, his heart was pounding at the expectation of renewed fellowship with someone that he dearly loved, his own flesh and blood, considered dead, but alive after all.

In Matthew 5, Jesus instructs us in prayer to begin by addressing the Almighty God as, “Our Father”. In the opening verses of his gospel, John draws a very clear picture of believers becoming God’s offspring:

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”
John 1: 12 ESV

The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the believers in Rome, is also seeking to impart the same concept:

“. . . the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” Romans 8: 15b-16 NIV

Clearly, there is a parent/child dynamic in our wonderful relationship with God, a dynamic that speaks of love, intimacy and open communication. What is the channel or platform for that communication? Prayer – lots and lots of talking with God. That’s why our Father loves prayer so much, because it is the opportunity for His kids to spend time in fellowship with “Abba”, and He with us.

Are there other reasons why God considers prayer important? Without question, and there are excellent books filled with good teaching on our participation with God through prayer in the fulfilling of His redemptive purposes. Some cite our being trained through the discipline of prayer to reign in eternity. Others will mention the importance of prayer as a release point for our faith as we believe God for His miraculous intervention in the affairs of humanity.

But how often do I stop to think about prayer from Father’s point of view? What’s His posture like when I drag myself up in the morning and make my weary way to have my devotions? Is He standing there with His arms folded, saying, “*Well, Hunt, it’s about time!*” Or is He seated on His throne, looking very dispassionate and uninterested as I slink into the corner? When we roll into church, cranky and distracted, two minutes before the beginning of Holy Communion, what is Father thinking? Does He really care that we’ve come?

Dare I suggest that as you or I approach the Father in prayer or public worship, His heart is pounding! He has been looking forward to spending some time together, even as He looked forward to those walks with Adam and Eve in the Garden. Guilt and shame will deny that God would ever want to be in the same room with me. But, the glory of forgiveness says that the way has been cleared by the Blood of His Son for my access, right into His very presence, and He is anxious to spend time with me. What an incredible privilege! Such potential fellowship!

My prayer is that I will grow increasingly more comfortable in His presence, that I will not just grunt at Him like a teenager, but will delight in His presence to such an extent that I will never want to be anywhere else! It doesn’t get any better than that!

May I suggest that in this Lenten season, rather perhaps than giving up something, consider intentionally investing some extra time every day in your relationship with Abba Father. Choose to pursue intimacy with Him. Perhaps it will involve giving up some other time-consumer to free up those minutes to invest, but how blessed we will be, and how delighted will be the Father’s heart if we do!

God loves prayer – real heartfelt, transparent, vulnerable communication between a loving Father and His kids. May we learn to love prayer as much as He does. Amen.

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Praise God ...

- For the **incredible privilege of access through prayer** that we have been given as God’s adopted sons and daughters.
- For the **reformation God is working out** in global Anglicanism – and the entire Christian Church. In the midst of chaos, He is building His Kingdom and refining His bride, the Church.

- For **faithful Anglican primates, bishops, clergy and laity** – throughout the Communion – who are standing for truth even when their stand for Christ and His Word makes them targets of attack. Especially we praise the Lord for the continuing faithful witness by the GAFCON primates.

Please pray...

- For our primate **Archbishop Foley Beach** (& Allison) – Pray for great wisdom, discernment, courage and strength as he gives leadership to ACNA, particularly in light of the polarized and volatile political climate in the US.
- For **Bishop Charlie Masters** (& Judy) – Pray for our diocesan bishop as he provides guidance and leadership of ANiC. May God grant him renewed courage, wisdom and vision. Pray also for physical protection and good health in the midst of his heavy travel schedule.
- For **Bishop Don Harvey** (& Trudy) – Pray for Bishop Don in his roles as ANiC's episcopal vicar and senior chaplain to the ACNA College of Bishops.
- For **ANiC's suffragan bishops**: Stephen Leung (& Nona) and Trevor Walters (& Dede). Pray for discernment, energy and grace as they care for their clergy and congregations. Also pray for Bishops Ron Ferris (Langley, BC) and Malcolm Harding (retired in Brandon, MB).
- For our **Archdeacons**: the Venerables Ron Corcoran (Vancouver Island), Dan Gifford (BC), Bruce Chamberlayne (Alberta & BC Interior), Paul Charbonneau (Ontario), Tim Parent (Ottawa Valley), Paul Crossland (Prairies), Michael McKinnon (New England, USA), and Darrell Critch (Atlantic Region & Quebec).
- For all **ANiC clergy** and families, especially those experiencing spiritual and physical attack.
- For **a major awakening**, a sovereign move of God in our churches and across our nations like has not been seen in our lifetimes. **Rise Up, O God** we pray. Intervene, O Lord, in the midst of our decaying culture and society! Raise up **an army of intercessors** who will call out to you for a mighty visitation of your power and presence! Send out **labourers into the harvest**, O Lord!
- Pray for God's anointing on the Ven Ron & Deirdre Corcoran's ministry, **Wounded Healers**, launched recently on the West Coast. May Christ's healing power flow to the hurting. Pray also for other ANiC healing ministries, including **Living Water Healing Streams** in the Ottawa area.
- For the **Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada** (ARDFC) whose new project is helping the ACNA church plants in Cuba purchase a van. This van will meet transportation needs and provide a means of revenue generation to reduce dependence on external financial support.
- For **those who serve us and are in authority over us** – our police forces, our armed forces, our emergency responders, our municipal elected officials, our provincial MLAs, MPPs and premiers, and our federal MPs and Prime Minister.
- For **God's wisdom for world leaders** with regard to conflicts in the Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq, and European nations struggling to absorb refugees. Pray for the hundreds of thousands of refugees who are seeking safety and asylum in Europe and here in North America. Pray for those churches and communities that are welcoming refugees that they may be a witness to God's compassionate care, both by what they say and do.
- Pray for **protection of innocent civilians** – adults and children – who so often are the victims in today's warfare. Pray especially for the many Middle Eastern, Asian and African Christians who are brutally persecuted for their refusal to renounce their faith in Jesus.