

Partners in P R A Y E R

LENT 2013

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

Our Mission: The Anglican Fellowship of Prayer serves the church by encouraging, facilitating, and promoting the understanding and discipline of prayer in the Anglican Communion.

From our president

Dear Friends,

It's been said that we make resolutions and God gives absolutions. Well, we've made our New Year's resolutions, and I wonder just how many of us have kept them. Do we just forget them or do we need to ask God to absolve us from them? Not really, for those resolutions are more than likely secular and probably only our spouse, a close friend, or maybe just ourselves know, so there need be no real concern if we fall short in our keeping them. It was fun making them.

However, now we come to the Lenten season where our resolutions become a bit more important because they are made with Jesus in mind, thinking of Him fasting and praying those 40 days.

We think in terms of those 40 days being an absolute count, but to the Jewish mind, the way I understand it, the number 40 means the amount of time needed to consummate whatever is going on (eg. 40 days of rain and the flood, 40 years in the wilderness). For instance Paul said that he was beaten five times by the Jews with 40 lashes less one (2 Corinthians 11:24) which meant that he could be beaten again by the Jews if they so deemed it. However, if he had been beaten with the full 40 lashes he could not have been beaten again for his punishment would have been consummated.

The important thing, however, is not to be legalistic about the actual number of days, but to reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made so that we could be reconciled with God, and to be thankful for that. We don't make the Lenten "sacrifices" to be good or to be perfect. Indeed, speaking for myself, I usually pick something small and simple to give up (or take on), and even at that I usually fail. My inability to be "perfect" in some small and simple thing should remind me of the sacrifice of Jesus and why Easter is so important. If we could be perfect, Jesus would not have had to die.

As the reading for Ash Wednesday in [Our Daily Bread](#) says, "Although giving up something does not make anyone good or perfect, it should bring to mind the sacrifice of a good and perfect God that makes our salvation possible". That, then, is the purpose of our Lenten "sacrifices" and needs to be on our minds each of these 40 days. Thanks be to God!

Will Williams,
President, AFP US Council

Our president retires



Will has written inspiring letters like the one above for almost every *AFP Partners in Prayer* newsletter since 1994, the year after he was elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and then as President of the US Council of the AFP in 1995. I met him and his dear wife Nancy at the May 1996 AFP International Prayer Conference in Kanuga, when they were participants in a workshop I attended. Their faith was simple, vital, matter of fact, natural, and catching. I have been privileged to be with them at AFP meetings and conferences since I came on the board in 2004.

Nancy's health has been declining for the past year and a half, to the extent that Will feels he must concentrate first of all on helping her. He wrote a letter of resignation to the AFP board February 8, effective February 28. Our prayers are asked for Nancy's return to health.

We are very grateful to Dr. Williams for his leadership of AFP. He has steered us through difficult and changing times as we lost executive directors and our executive secretary, and in 2006 became an all volunteer organization. We thank all of you for your prayers and contributions as we keep up our website and Facebook page, have occasional prayer conferences and board meetings, and continue to publish our newsletter. Please continue to pray for us, and do not hesitate to volunteer if you would be willing to serve on our board, or as a Diocesan Representative, or as an organizer in your parish, or as a teacher or writer on prayer--or if you have someone to recommend. -Celinda Scott, Corr. Sec'y, AFP US Council

"If we are called to be a renewed Church, we are called to be a praying church. A renewed church is one that speaks and acts for God. But we cannot speak for God unless we first speak with Him. We cannot act for God unless we first know what He would have us do through our immediate and constant confrontation with Him. We can do nothing in the end without the power of the Holy Spirit."

(the Rt. Rev. Donald Hultstrand, The Praying Church)

From the Diocese of Pittsburgh

Below is an Ash Wednesday meditation by Rt. Reverend Dorsey McConnell, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. It can be seen and heard at < <http://www.episcopalpgh.org/a-special-lenten-message-from-bishop-mcconnell>>. The script was transcribed by C. Scott.

“It’ll be Ash Wednesday soon and if you come to Trinity Cathedral at 7:30 in the morning or 12 noon or 5:15 PM, or come for Ashes to Go at Market Square between one and two in the afternoon, you will receive ashes from me or from a member of the Cathedral clergy. If you do that, I will take my thumb, put some ashes on it, and put them on your forehead in a shape that looks roughly like this (a cross). It’s the cross of Jesus. It’s a reminder of his death and of our own mortal nature, and it’s the way that we begin Lent.

Now, there are some who have suggested we do some rebranding, that we give up this cross of ashes in favor of some other design. A person who has been thinking of this has come up with a couple of alternatives and this is their lead choice (picture of smiley face). You see, they say that Lent is a downer, Christians are always walking around sounding so grumpy and we ought to use the buzz around Ash Wednesday to come up with something-- oh, I don’t know-- more positive or upbeat. So, according to this, you could come to the cathedral at any of those times and go through the rest of the day with a smiley face on your forehead. Wouldn’t that be a more positive advertisement for God than this (picture of cross)?

I get the point. It’s just that there are plenty of times when life doesn’t look like this (smiley face). If you are sick or someone you love is sick or your job is going badly or you’ve done something terrible that you regret, or somebody has done something to you that they should regret but they don’t, or you are sad or afraid or ashamed or you’re just so tired you feel like you can’t take another step, this, well, it doesn’t do much good.

But this (the cross) says something different. It says God knows what you are going through because he’s been through something terrible himself. He’s been through it for you, for me. It says whatever awful thing you’ve done that you think you have to pay for or make others pay for has already been paid for by God. In short it says that God is with you as you go through whatever you are going through right now. And He promises he will bring you safely out on the other side.

One way to think of it is this: if you were in a really bad accident, what would you want to hear from God? ‘I will get you out of this,’ or ‘Have a nice day (smiley face).’ So we’ll be sticking with the cross on Ash Wednesday and every day. Bring whatever is on your heart and meet there, with us, a God who can do something about it, who can genuinely help you, and will never leave you alone.

Again, I’m Dorsey McConnell, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. We’re about the power of God through the love, life, and work of Jesus. Hope I see you soon.”

Bishop McConnell is among several new bishops to have been consecrated in The Episcopal Church in 2012, and he is our first permanent diocesan bishop since 2008. We are very blessed. We are also very proud; he is among those to whom his alma mater, General Theological Seminary, is awarding an honorary doctorate at their commencement in May. See < <http://www.episcopalpgh.org/bishop-mcconnell-to-receive-general-seminary-doctor-of-divinity-degree>> for the full announcement.

From the Diocese of Texas

Bruce Newman sent us the news recently of the death of his father, James W. Newman, on January 15 at the age of 97. Jim's life was inspiring, and we are grateful to Bruce for telling us about it.

Jim was born and educated in Ohio and began his professional career there, but later joined IBM in Lexington, Kentucky, and moved to Austin, Texas to start IBM there. He liked big band music and played tennis into his 80s.

Jim was a lifelong Episcopalian. He and his wife, Betty, were very active members of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Austin for many years, and served as Diocesan Representatives for the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. They attended several AFP International Conferences, and said they enjoyed getting to know more about the National Church. Will Williams, AFP President, remembers attending a conference in Houston which Jim and Betty helped to plan, and his enthusiasm and energy.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty, his sister Katherine, and his oldest son, Jimmy. Still living in Austin are several children and their families. His brother-in-law and his wife live in Waverly, Ohio.

Quoted in "St. Matthew's Sage": When asked if he had any Life Lessons to share, Jim offered these:

- A strong person is strong enough to listen to both sides of an argument.
- God is Supreme.
- You can't put a definition to God because that would make you God.
- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- You never learn anything by talking, only listening.
- *All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. –Ralph Waldo Emerson*

From the Community of the Transfiguration

The AFP is grateful for the prayerful support that the *Community of the Transfiguration* in Cincinnati, Ohio has given us over the years. About the community: it was founded in 1898 on the Feast of the Transfiguration by Eva Lee Matthews and Beatrice Henderson. They hoped to follow Mother Eva's vision of patterning their lives after Mary and Martha of Bethany, and took vows. The order grew. Today there are several branch houses with a variety of ministries. Those interested in spiritual retreats are welcome make arrangements through the website, <http://www.ctsisters.org>. Quoting from the website: "The Community of the Transfiguration is a Religious Order for Women in the Episcopal Church, USA and part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. We live together in Community under the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. ...Our order was founded in the United States and our Rule of Life, while influenced by the great traditions of monasticism, is as distinctly American as the order. Our dedication is to the deep mysteries of the Transfiguration of Jesus...as our Mother Eva Mary saw in it: 'the union of the heavenly and the earthly; the sacramental presence of God. The vision is the King in his beauty is given to us that the light may shine through us and guide others to know, love, and glorify him'."

NOTE: Although the Feast of the Transfiguration is celebrated August 6, we hear about Jesus's transfiguration the last Sunday of Epiphany season in the Gospel reading, Luke 9:28-36. Truly, this reading helps prepare our hearts for the Lenten season, as does the Proper Preface for each Sunday of Epiphany: "Because in the mystery of the of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your son Jesus Christ our Lord. "

From the Order of St. Luke the Physician: "Heart of Wholeness Healing and Teaching" Conference

The conference took place at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Vancouver, WA February 8 & 9. It was well attended, with a couple coming from as far away as Vancouver, Canada. The keynote speaker was the Rev. Derek Lightbourne from New Zealand. He gave three main teachings, with a wrap up at the ending, Eucharist, and healing service.

His talks, entitled "Immersed in Luke," centered on Christ's ministry of healing in Luke's Gospel. Jesus read the prophecy of the Messiah's coming: "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" Jesus needed to be close to his Father and to pray in order to heal, and we too need to have a strong prayer life. Jesus' ministry was Spirit filled; we too need to be filled with the Holy Spirit because it is God who is the healer. Luke observes the wholeness in healing: the emotional, the physical and the spiritual.

Sickness "paralyses" us. It is important to support those who are in need with prayer. Faith is needed by the "healers" more than the one who is sick. We need to reach out and minister to the whole family as well as the one who is ill, as Jesus did with Jairus' daughter. Jesus healed and met the practical need of the person. When Jairus' daughter was healed, He said "Give her something to eat."

Ministry to the "outcast" and marginalized: Jesus met Zacchaeus' needs and his family's. Salvation, which is part of God's healing, came to the whole family. Genealogy was vital to the Jews. It meant much to be called a "son of Abraham." Healing of the generations of one's family may be important in order to bring healing to the present. The woman at the well, herself an outcast, found healing (John 4). It is also always important to recognize the importance of the doctors' practice and medicine while we pray for a person's recovery; one complements the other. Healing from shame: persons caught in the grip of addiction are often oppressed by it. Jesus came to free the oppressed. Addiction is a form of worship and very difficult to heal. Healing of grief: Jesus read, "He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted" (Isaiah 61:1). Jesus sent his disciples out in twos, and it is important that we pray together, twos or threes, for it is then that Jesus' promise is fulfilled that He will be present. We need to focus on Jesus Christ and His saving sacrifice, never on a person, for it is always God who heals.

There were a number of helpful workshops offered. "Outreach in Schools as Healing" revealed the needs of poor children and their families, and how a school principal involved five local schools in helping others. Here, it seems, is a real mission field for healing. I was reminded that Christian healing through Jesus happens in all places today, for His promise to us is, "I am the same Yesterday, Today and Forever."

--from Pat Hayes, DR from the Diocese of Oregon and Board Member, AFP, who attended the conference with three other members of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Beaverton, OR

AFP Resources

1) Please visit our website and recommend it to others. 2) If you are on Facebook, "friend" our Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Group Page. 3) Bishop Hultstrand's *The Praying Church* is available from our website. 4) **A new edition of *The Personal Prayer Notebook*, printed by St. Michael's Church in Charleston, SC is now ready!** *** Cost is \$19 plus shipping, with a prepaid check made out to Saints Alive Bookstore. To order, contact Brenda Georgi at 843-724-7590 or brenda@stmichaelschurch.net
NOTE: we would appreciate any donation you might be able to make to support our ministry, the publication and mailing of the newsletters, and the maintenance of our website. *Please send to AFP, 1106 Mansfield Avenue, Indiana, PA 15701.*

**1106 Mansfield Ave.
Indiana, PA 15701**

Change Service Requested

**Lift us, O God, to your presence
where we can be still and know that you
are God, that you are closer to us than the breath
we breathe, and that you are always doing for us and
for those we love far better things than we ever desire
or pray for. -*Trinity Church, St. Paul's Chapel***

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