

Partners in P R A Y E R

PENTECOST 2017

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.

Letter from our president, the Rev. Dr. John R. Throop

Dear Friends,

J. B. Phillips' timeless book, *Your God Is Too Small*, was first published 65 years ago. Phillips spoke to believers and to skeptics alike. His primary point: so often, we imagine God in human terms, with human images and human terms. We have it all backwards. When facing a challenge or a crisis, people are apt to pray, "God, be merciful to me and help me." If we take a godly approach, we would pray instead, "God, help me (and those I counsel) to see your way and your provision."

God has infinitely greater understanding and compassion. A lesson we learn in spiritual formation is that it's far more important for us to train ourselves to see things from a divine perspective rather than to expect God to answer prayer from a human point of view. That certainly is the case in the opening of the second chapter of the Book of Acts. The woman and men of The Way were expecting Jesus to return in ways they could understand. In the meantime, they were locked behind closed doors to be safe and secure. Then the Holy Spirit came upon them. The locked doors were irrelevant to God. *The Pentecost event and experience opened the minds, eyes, hearts and souls of those first followers of the Risen Christ to move into the world with the Good News.*

A lesson I have learned more often than not: *my prayer is too small*. I serve as rector of a growing congregation, where I've been in place for about a year and a half. Last summer, the music minister retired after 14 years here. It's tough finding a musician who can play multiple instruments, with different musicians, and be familiar with different styles of music in worship. As the retirement date drew near for the music minister, I beseeched the Lord. "O God," I prayed, "you know whom we need. Just let me know who it is—and I'll be okay if I get a pianist who can't play organ, or an organist who can't play piano. Whatever, God."

At that time, I was in touch with the dean at Nashotah House, about 75 miles away. My topic was unrelated to the search. Then, it was if the fingers keyed into the email, "And if you have a starving seminarian or spouse who is musical, let the person know we can put him or her to work." The dean replied that he had someone in mind and would pass on the request. Within half an hour, I was in conversation with a seminarian who had 40 years of choral experience, could play organ and keyboard (and guitar and, by the way, had a set of handbells). Within a month, she was in place to get us to the next step to a permanent call. And I said to God, "Goodness, I guess I should have imagined all of this grace—but I prayed in human terms to meet an immediate need. Lord, I'll do better next time."

And that next time came a few months later. The office secretary and her husband were relocating out of the area. That gave me, along with the parish leaders, the opportunity to re-define the position as Parish Administrator. This time, I prayed, "OK, God, I know that you know what and whom we need. May I be ready for you to open the door." Without any public advertising, a person inquired about the position—a deeply devout Christian with corporate graphic design experience,

computer skills and financial experience. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from one of the state universities. That's way more than I would have prayed for—but exactly what and whom we need. God's vision, in this case, was mightier than any prayer I could offer.

And I could go on—but I hope that, right now, you are able to call to mind from your life some wonderful ways that God's answer to prayer was far beyond what you could imagine. The Holy Spirit inspires those who pray to be confident that God will do wondrous things in our lives and in the challenges of this time in history. And the Spirit will open our prayer so that we can move away from the solutions we've devised to the possibilities of God's provision. Let's continue to learn to **pray with anticipation of all that God can do**. Then let us be prepared to find our lives transformed and our vision to be set on all that God can do however we may ask.

Blessings in Christ Jesus,
The Rev. John R. Throop, D.Min.
President, AFP Executive Council U.S.

Also from our president: "The Best Prayer Manual You'll Find"

In our Anglican tradition, we have a calendar celebrating major events in the life of Jesus, major and not-so-major saints, a movement in the Church (Pentecost), and a fundamental doctrine (Trinity Sunday). What's even more remarkable in the calendar (as updated in *Holy Women, Holy Men*, 2009): a date on which we give thanks to God for the first *Book of Common Prayer*, which appeared in 1549. The feast is "moveable"—that is, "on a weekday following the Day of Pentecost." (Note: the Day of Pentecost in 2017 was June 4.) And, as the *Book of Common Prayer* has done so well throughout its various editions and supplements, there's a Collect (prayer) giving thanks to God for this living document. Read and reflect on the prayer, which appears on page 399 of *Holy Women, Holy Men*:

"Almighty and everliving God, whose servant Thomas Cranmer, with others, restored the language of the people in the prayers of your Church: Make us always thankful for this heritage; and help us so to pray in the Spirit and with the understanding, that we may worthily magnify your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

Through my 37 years of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church, I have been privileged to help shape people in their prayer lives. My primary tool has been the *Book of Common Prayer*. It remains the best "prayer manual" that the Holy Spirit, working through the human mind, has ever developed.

Through the resources of the Prayer Book, we can pray together in public worship locally and globally. We truly can pray together no matter what our language, race, ethnicity or style may be. Many years ago, I was in Mexico on mission and, on a Sunday, attended a small Episcopal parish in the city. The Prayer Book was in Spanish, and the people were in devout prayer. With just-passable Spanish, I was able to join fully in prayer with them since the order was exactly what I prayed in this country. The Prayer Book allows us to be present in prayer and pray in the Spirit even when language is a challenge. The prayers are in the language of a specific people, and it is a universal language.

The Prayer Book is immensely valuable also as a private devotional guide. No matter where we are, as we use the resources of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, and also Noonday as well as Compline services, we can join with many others around the world who are in prayer in the same way—yet we are on our own or with a few others. A discipline of the Daily Office gives us an order and direction to daily prayer. The table of readings (the lectionary) gives the course of prayerful reading and digesting of Scripture. And we have an opportunity to offer fervent prayer for our needs and those of others. With a bit of guidance from a faithful priest or a spiritual director, we can use the Daily Office to move into a time of contemplation and communion with God.

The Prayer Book also gives us guidance in how to pray with and for others. People often have told me that they wish that they had the ability to offer prayers for family members and friends in need of God’s healing grace. I can point to places in the Prayer Book that help them to know how to pray and what to say. Those who never thought that they could put a prayer together on their own now can offer prayer and even lead groups in prayer.

Finally, we can celebrate the *Book of Common Prayer* because **we can select from a wide range of prayers for different times, seasons and events in life and move us through a year as well as through the whole of our earthly life.** The blessing of the Prayer Book is that we have prayers to offer for the very young, and for the aging; for our nation and for our community; for peace, and for those serving in the armed forces; and for those moving through the passages of life.

As you open a copy of the *Book of Common Prayer*--the 1549 edition, the 1662 edition, the 1928 edition, the 1979 edition, or some of the new resources being developed --give thanks to God that, through the Holy Spirit, you have the tools to use for a vibrant and active prayer life. You also have ways to help others move into a deeper life of prayer. And you are not praying on your own or alone. You are surrounded by a cloud of prayerful witnesses in other times and living saints around the world today. --the Rev. Dr. John R. Throop

We remember in gratitude and in sorrow:

John T. Rohde, March 1929-April 13, 2017

Robert Hilton, who worked with John on AFP’s online intercessory prayer ministry since it began, has this to say about John: “After John retired as Executive Director of El Hogar Ministries, he and his late wife Jocie both served as Diocesan Representatives, and John was a very active member of AFP’s Board of Trustees. Perhaps John’s greatest contribution to AFP was serving as the online prayer coordinator for 23 years since its inception in 1994. He faithfully received the prayer requests from Bob Hilton (who collected the requests from the AFP website) and others who sent requests directly to him. It is estimated that he handled well over ten thousand prayer requests (if not tens of thousands) from all over the world during this time, categorizing the requests and then distributing them to approximately 100 prayer warriors every two weeks or so. This ministry will continue but his humor, compassion, and dedication to this ministry will be missed. Well done, good and faithful servant.” Many thanks to Bob Hilton for these comments, and also for his continuation of the ministry. Bob says there is a need for more prayer warriors and would like to see more members of the younger generation participate. Volunteering to be an intercessor can be done at www.afp.org, the AFP website.

Patricia Hayes, departed this life June 4, 2017

Pat wrote recently that a visit to her diocese (Western Oregon) by the Rt. Rev. Donald Hultstrand in 1977 “began the presence of the AFP in Oregon.” But she was no stranger to prayer, which sustained her from her childhood and young adulthood in England, where she grew up, to the last years of her life when she was valiantly battling lung cancer. At the end of many emails she sent during those years were the words “NEVER GIVE UP, life is beautiful, everything happens for a reason, live with thanksgiving, one day at a time, and the best news of all, GOD REALLY LOVES YOU!” In a 1994 issue of the AFP Newsletter, Pat told about the 20th anniversary of the prayer chain at St. Bartholomew’s, Beaverton, where she was a communicant. It began as a home study course on prayer she was asked to teach after being inspired by the Lutheran prayer chain in Beaverton. “We even helped the Presbyterian church start a prayer chain,” she recalled with a laugh. In the spring of 1981, Pat had become the AFP Diocesan Representative in Western Oregon, and reported in an AFP newsletter about the first parish retreat at St. Bartholomew’s. The next year she reported that a Prayer Workshop conducted by Harry and Emily Griffith had been hosted by St. Bartholomew’s for the diocese. In 1985, she wrote about healing prayer ministries and spiritual direction in her diocese. Pat continued to lead in prayer ministries in her parish and diocese, and to serve on the AFP US Council as Director of Diocesan Representatives, for many years.

John Rohde and Patricia Hayes did so much to help the AFP with our mission: “to encourage, facilitate, and promote the discipline of prayer in the Anglican Communion.” John (with the help of Bob Hilton) co-chaired the on-line intercessory prayer ministry accessed from our website, and Pat encouraged parish prayer chains and diocesan teachings on prayer.

From the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania, TEC

Diane Pyle is the AFP Representative on the Diocesan ECW board of the Diocese of Northwestern PA, as well as being the Diocesan AFP Representative for the diocese. In March the diocesan newsletter, *The Forward*, published an article she wrote called “The Personal Nature of Prayer Life.” It starts as follows: “Your prayer life is like a fingerprint—no one has the same.” Not all of us have a conversion experience we can remember, but Diane recalls the influence the book *The Transforming Nature of Friendship*, by Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, had on her understanding of Jesus after conversion. She knew that “Jesus, God the Father and the Holy Spirit wanted a ‘relationship’ with her.” She continues: “My approach to prayer...begins with honesty of mind and heart...I try to find a word to express what is bothering me...I then turn that thought to God’s will for healing, forgiveness or release....I lift up names in petition...Prayer has become a very safe and loving place.”

From the Diocese of South Carolina, ACNA

Ida Spitz Swindell has been an active member of the AFP for many years. She encourages small group prayer and writes prayers. We will soon be able to buy her book *Hear His Voice: Healing for the Mind, Soul, and Body from Prophetic Intercession*. Ida tells us that “it is comprised of devotional thoughts expressed in poetic form. Each page has accompanying scripture verse. Each page deals with a life circumstance common to all people. There is a study guide at the end for individual or group study.” In the second stage of galley proofs, it will be on the market in a few weeks, offered by WestBow Publishers (a division of Thomas Nelson and Zondervan).

Thoughtful Trinity Sunday Comment

“Sunday was Trinity Sunday - a day intended to celebrate the fullness of the Triune God (not, as some claim, to celebrate a doctrine).” Board member Angie Forde wrote these words on her Facebook page June 14, then went on to quote a hymn by Charles Wesley celebrating that fullness (she said there were many by him on that subject!): “Eternal, Triune God, let all the hosts above, let all on earth below record and dwell upon thy love. When heaven and earth are fled before thy glorious face, sing all the saints thy love hath made thine everlasting praise.”

AFP Publications and Resources

We have the following books in stock: *The Praying Church*, by Bishop Hultstrand (\$14.95); *The Parish as a Center of Prayer* (\$5), *The Personal Prayer Notebook* (\$20), and *The Powerhouse of Prayer* (\$2), written under the auspices of the AFP with the help of Harry Griffith; and *The Magnificent Promise* (\$10), by Helen Shoemaker. We also have cassette tapes from AFP International Prayer Conferences. Jane Hall’s *The Kingdom of Heaven is Like Unto: Devotions for Those Who Work in Corrections* is also available. Please call 724-463-6436 to order, or mail your request to the address above. Postage will vary.

If you would like to receive occasional prayer requests or AFP News Items via e-mail, please call 724-463-6436. About our AFP Web Page (www.afp.org): the sidebar has many useful addresses to click on. There is, of course, the Prayer Request ministry, which John Rohde (whose passing we mourn) and Robert Hilton so ably co-chaired, and we are grateful to Bob for continuing. Also: you can access many issues of the AFP Newsletter, useful resources if you are looking for prayers or articles about prayer—or would like to be reminded of AFP acquaintances and friends and things they said. And there is a link which connects you to churches in the worldwide Anglican communion. –Also: don’t forget our AFP Facebook page.

A final word

We are grateful, as always, for the encouragement and leadership in prayer of Bishop Don Hultstrand—also to new board members Paige Grimball and Angie Forde, who set up our AFP Facebook Page. Thanks to AFP members like Gillian Farquhar Delancy (Diocese of the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands) for their informative and inspiring contributions to that page. We urge all of you to contribute. AND—we urge you to let us know if you, or someone you know, would be interested in serving on the board. About meetings: we have had three telephone conferences since our fall 2014 meeting at Calvary Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh.

Your prayers are asked for the US Council of the AFP as we seek guidance on the possibility of hiring a part-time executive director for a specified period of time. We are grateful for the leadership of our president, the Rev. Dr. John Throop, in his second year as rector of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Sheboygan Falls, WI. The parish has grown under his leadership.

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer
1106 Mansfield Ave.
Indiana, PA 15701

Change Service Requested

Eternal, Triune God, let all the hosts above,
let all on earth below record and dwell upon thy love.
When heaven and earth are fled before thy glorious face,
sing all the saints thy love hath made thine everlasting praise.

From a hymn by Charles Wesley (1707-1788)