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*Devoted to
Prayer*



HOLY TRINITY
ANGLICAN CHURCH

DEVOTED TO PRAYER

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul writes, *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful...* (4:2) This guide is designed to encourage individuals, small groups, and those who gather informally to pray with one another at Holy Trinity to delight in and be devoted to prayer.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT PRAYER FROM PAUL?

The apostle Paul includes prayers as well as instructions about prayer in his letters. The following six points about prayer are based on what Paul teaches and models for us in how he prays:

1. Seek God's perspective.

In his letters Paul stresses the importance of being of the same mind as Jesus. (Philippians 2:5-8) and of setting our minds on the things that are above. (See Colossians 3:1-3). So, knowing that the human standpoint is darkened by sin and often shaped by fear, Paul sought Jesus' perspective on everything. He did not let his emotions guide his prayers. Instead, he prayed looking and listening for direction from the Holy Spirit and seeking the Lord's perspective on whatever, or for whomever, he prayed.

The evangelist Lilius Trotter illustrates for us how to do this. In one of her journals she wrote, "If we can listen in stillness, till our hearts begin to vibrate to the thing that [the Lord] is thinking and feeling about the matter in question, whether it concerns ourselves or others, we can from that moment begin praying downwards from His throne, instead of praying upwards to Him...No longer a weary wrestling to get access and an answer, but catching His thought and swiftly asking alongside in His name..." (*A Blossom in the Dessert*, pp. 60-61) This insight is similar to Paul's teaching about seeking God's perspective. So prayer should involve seeking God's mind about what concerns us and then "praying downwards from the throne of God."

2. Pray with hope.

Hope is not wishful thinking. It is rooted in Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead, who will return one day, in triumph. On that day all opposition to him and toward his people will come to an end. Yet even now we have a foretaste of that great day, through Jesus' unmerited and all-powerful grace, working in us and around us, and with the gift of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of what awaits us. This is the basis of our hope.

Paul always had the hope of the resurrection and the return of Christ at the forefront of his mind. He was fully aware of the dangers and trials around him, but he also saw, with the eyes of his heart, the abundant grace of Jesus saturating his life and the kingdom of Heaven on the horizon. And this is how he prayed: having deep concern for present circumstances, but never lacking hope in and through Jesus.

3. Pray without ceasing.

Paul instructs us to pray without ceasing, in chapter five of his first letter to the Thessalonians (v.17). In a sense, prayer should be as natural and habitual as breathing. This means that prayer is not just something we do at the beginning of the day, in our quiet time, but something we do throughout the day, bringing to the Lord our needs, and concerns and our hopes – and bringing before him the needs of those we meet or think about during the day. Prayer does not have to be long or labored. Just turn over the events and people of the day in prayer to the Lord. Throughout the day we can pray about whatever crosses our mind.

4. Pray for growth in Christlikeness.

Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians, *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.* (2:20) It is the work of the Holy Spirit to transform our sinful nature so that the nature of Jesus is established within us. This transformation is not something we can bring about, but it is something to ask for and welcome. Many of Paul's prayers illustrate for us what it means to grow in Christlikeness and they show us what to desire and delight in. We can use his prayers as we pray for ourselves and for others. Here are a few examples:

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill [me] with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit [I] may abound in hope.

Ephesians 1:18-20

I pray that the eyes of [my] heart may be enlightened in order that [I] may know the hope to which he has called [me], the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead...

Ephesians 3:16-19

I pray that out of God's glorious riches he may strengthen [me] with power through his Spirit in [my] inner being, so that Christ may dwell in [my] heart through faith. And I pray that [I], being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that [I] may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Colossians 1:9-12

May [I] be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified [me] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Philemon :6

[Help me to] be active in sharing [my] faith so that [I] will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

5. Ask for prayer from fellow Christians.

Paul does not hesitate to ask for prayer. He understood the power of prayer. He writes in his second letter to the Corinthians, Chapter ten, verse four, *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* For the Christian, prayer is a divine weapon to use against the power of the enemy and to use

for building one another up in Christ.

So, if you are a student and you have a test coming up or an important paper due, ask for prayer. If you are expecting a baby, or hoping to conceive or adopt, ask for prayer. Ask for prayer if you are engaged. Or if you are not, but long to be married, ask for prayer. If you are concerned about a friend, or if you are sick, or if you want to pray for Christians who are undergoing persecution, ask for prayer. Whatever is on your mind and heart, seek out fellow Christians who will join with you in prayer about it. Avail yourself of the power of prayer!

6. Pray for the work of the Gospel.

When Paul gives instructions about prayer in chapter four of his letter to the Colossians, he also writes, *At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ...* (v. 3) The kind of prayer Paul is referring to is what has always preceded a gospel movement. The great revivals in our own country were preceded by prayer, offered by Christians who were longing for their neighbors to know the saving love of Jesus. For several years they gathered together in prayer, asking and waiting for a movement of the gospel to take place in their towns and cities. Tim Keller writes: “Prayer is critical in preparing for and bringing about gospel movements. And we must be bold, united and consistent in asking for God’s presence and the gospel to renew global cities.” (Redeemer City to City, May 9, 2018, Gospel Movement: The Role of Prayer)



ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF PRAYER

We can identify four components of prayer found in many prayers throughout the Bible, especially in the Psalms. These components form an acronym: A. C. T. S. which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. Using these components in our prayers will help to direct our attention toward God and train us to listen for his response. Each component is described below:

ADORATION

Adoration is about acknowledging God's attributes, his works, and his role in our lives. Another name for adoration is praise and it has a way of setting aright our minds about God's authority, power and good intentions toward us. When we incorporate adoration into our prayers, we tend to pray more hopefully, because offering praise to the Lord reminds us that nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37). Here are four examples of adoration:

Psalm 147:1, 3-5

Praise the Lord! ...He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

Isaiah 64:4

Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

1 Timothy 6:15

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lies in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Suggestion: Stop throughout the day, whether at work or home, and offer adoration to the Lord. Stand outside for a moment and look around you. Praise the Lord for the beauty of his world. Make adoration a part of the rhythm of your daily life. Don't go to sleep without offering adoration and don't get out of bed the next morning before doing the same.

CONFESSION

Confession is about acknowledging the truth about ourselves before God, that we are sinners and he alone is just. When we recognize and declare our individual or corporate transgressions, we place ourselves in a position to receive God's forgiveness and grace, freely offered, which work to transform our sinful nature and bring about revival in our community. Here are two examples of confession of corporate sins:

Ezra 9:5-7

⁵Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the Lord my God ⁶and prayed: "I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.⁷ From the days of our ancestors until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today..."

Daniel 9:4-7

"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ⁷To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you

have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.

Keep in mind: Regret plays no role in the Christian life. Regret is about looking back, reviewing again and again our sins. Confession is about looking to the Lord, acknowledging our sins before him, and in so doing, releasing them to him and receiving his forgiveness. We cannot at the same time practice regret and stand in the grace of God's forgiveness. Sin is to be confessed and relinquished to the Lord. Grace is something to receive and walk in.

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving reminds us that the Lord is the source of all good things in our life and that we owe him thanks for all that we have. Offering thanks also helps us to identify blessings in life which we may have taken for granted and it serves to guard our hearts against pride, ingratitude and self-pity. Here are three examples of thanksgiving:

1 Chronicles 29:24

¹⁴“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Psalms 107:29-31

He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. ³⁰They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. ³¹Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

Ephesians 1:15-16

¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks [to God] for you, remembering you in my prayers...

Suggestion: As with adoration, stop throughout the day and offer thanks to the Lord. There is always something for which to be thankful. Offering thanksgiving will help to keep your eyes on the Lord and your ears attuned to what he is doing in your life.

SUPPLICATION

Supplication is about coming before the Lord in humility, acknowledging him as the source of all that is good and of all that we need and laying out before him whatever is of concern to us. Supplication has a way of reminding us that God is in charge of outcomes; he is in control, not us. When offering supplication, it is helpful to begin first with adoration, thanksgiving, and when appropriate confession. Beginning first with one or more of these components of prayer will help us to place our needs and wants in the proper perspective. Here are two examples of supplication:

Acts 4:24-30

²⁴When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: ““Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one. ²⁷Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

2 Chronicles 20:5-17

⁵Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard ⁶and said: “Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can

withstand you. ⁷ Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ⁹ 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.' ¹⁰ "But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. ¹¹ See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. ¹² Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

Suggestion: Reading through the Psalms on a regular basis will help shape your understanding of prayer and they can be used as models for your prayers.

LAMENT

A fifth component, Lament, is also important to use during times of personal and corporate distress. Lament is about expressing before God deep and profound feelings, primarily of grief and loss, but also of fear and desperation, either about something personal or about a catastrophic event which affects an entire community. In the Psalms, lament is usually accompanied by adoration and thanksgiving, which help those who are lamenting remember that God hears their cries, understands their suffering and will redeem it. Here are two examples of lament:

Psalm 88:3-5

³I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.
⁴I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength. ⁵I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

Lamentations 1:12

“Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which was brought upon me...



PRAYING WITH FELLOW CHRISTIANS

In chapter one of the Acts of the Apostles we see that even before the church began followers of Jesus gathered to pray together (1:14). Prayer with fellow believers was not something new. There are numerous instances of corporate prayer in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament. When they prayed, they prayed with one voice. These five points will help us as we seek to pray together with one voice:

1. Listen.

Before speaking aloud, ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and to direct your thoughts and words. Then, listen for what the Lord might want to tell you, before speaking aloud. He knows best how we should pray. Also, focus on what the person who is praying aloud is saying and not on what you want to say next. If you are only paying attention to your own thoughts, you will miss out on what the Lord is doing through other people in the group. Remember that you are praying as a team and not as individuals.

2. Be humble and vulnerable.

Beware of the temptation of seeking to impress others in the group with your prayers. Prayer is neither an opportunity to call attention to ourselves, nor an occasion to feel self-conscious about praying aloud. Pray from your heart and as you sense the Lord directing you. Keep in mind that Jesus preferred the simple prayers of a humble man to the grand prayers of a prideful “expert.” (Luke 18:9-14).

3. Remember: prayer is about asking.

Avoid any semblance of telling God what to do in prayer. There is no need to convince God to do or grant something, nor do we need to extol the virtues of the person or agency for whom we are praying. Simply ask the Lord to act on their behalf. Also, refrain from communicating information to the group as you are praying aloud to God. Do that before you begin prayer.

4. Focus more on the Lord and less on the problem.

If you are praying for someone who is sick or grieving, or going through a difficult time, first see in your mind's eye the person receiving from the Lord what you feel called to ask for, and then pray accordingly. This will help you to pray with hope and confidence in the Lord. Don't focus too much on pain, suffering, symptoms or problems. This will only discourage you and others in the group. Instead, focus more on the Lord, for whom nothing is impossible.

5. Conclude with Thanksgiving and Adoration.

Before you end, offer adoration and thanksgiving to God once more. This will help to encourage the group and increase your faith that the Lord will answer.



EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH

In his letters, Paul instructs his readers to encourage one another and to build up and edify the body of Christ. Praying for our church on a regular basis is an important aspect of this. Here are a few examples, from Paul's letters, of his prayers for the church, which model for us how to pray for our church, Holy Trinity:

Romans 15:5-6

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant [us] to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together [we] may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:9-11

May [our] love abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that [we] may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort [our] hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give [us] peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of [us].

And from the letter to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip [us] with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE HOW TO PRAY FOR SOMEONE

Use one of the prayers above, or those on page 4.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN PRAYER

- All Parish Prayer – every Monday from 5-6 pm in the Chapel.
- Neighborhood Gospel Prayer Walk – first Saturday of the month, except July, from 9-10 am. Meet in the Courtyard at 9 am.

OPPORTUNITIES TO RECEIVE PRAYER

- For any need: Sunday mornings during Communion and after every Sunday service.
- Specifically for healing: Sunday mornings during Communion and after every service; after the monthly Praise & Healing Prayer service (3rd Sunday of the month, from 5-6 pm). You may also request a healing prayer team to pray with you at your home or at the church, by appointment; for HTC members, only.

FORMING A PRAYER TEAM FOR YOUR MINISTRY OR EVENT

Every ministry and event sponsored by HTC benefits from prayer offered for it on a regular basis. If you do not have several people praying for your ministry or event, contact Rev. Claudia Greggs. Claudia will help you identify those involved in your ministry who may be willing to pray for it on a regular basis. Once you form a prayer team, Claudia can offer instruction to them on how to intercede in prayer.



SOME RECOMMENDED BOOKS ABOUT PRAYER

- Adventures in Prayer, by Catherine Marshall
- E. M. Bounds on Prayer, by E. M. Bounds
- Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God, by Tim Keller
- Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, by Richard Foster
- The Autobiography of George Mueller, by George Mueller
- Why Pray?: 40 Days From Words to Relationship, by John F. DeVries



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