

# THE new vine



## UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)

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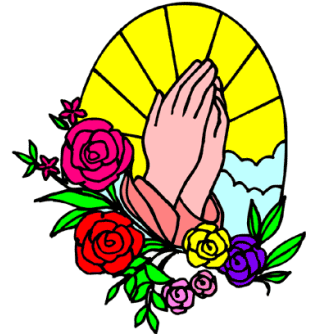
**PRAYER EDITION, Issue No 24, MARCH 2022**

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

Just in case some need reassurance – Prayer is answered!!

Could you imagine that, after deciding to focus this issue on prayer, a simple request in *Our Common Life* would result in what follows.

Here's a reminder of the request:



*"I am asking you all to send me your contributions about prayer - it can be a prayer that you wrote; a prayer that speaks to you from somewhere; a time when prayer was very meaningful to you; a time when prayer helped you greatly; a book on prayer that you have found helpful; answered prayer; a particular form of prayer; something personal or communal - whatever.  
In fact, I would like to aim for an edition that is written almost totally by the congregation, so it can be about any aspect of prayer that speaks to you. I suggest letting your minds go and opening your hearts. Please share with the rest of us.*

*I sense this could be one of those issues that comforts and holds us together during another difficult time, so please add your thoughts to help this to happen."*

And you have. Praise be. Thank you all for what you have produced. Prayer answered!

To save you the time of counting the contributors, I've done it for you. There have been 18 people from our congregation who have sent something for publication and that does not include Muriel and Jing who are yet to work their magic to ensure it actually reaches you in a format you find user friendly. That is, I suggest, a very gratifying response.

I suspect it will not be an easy read – there are lots of words and longer articles – but to me, that shows the subject is important to people and I think there is something for everyone, such is the variety. It is, I reckon, a more than one cup of coffee edition – so, settle in for a good read.

Of course, by the time you get the journal, we will have started our journey with Jesus to Jerusalem – the church seasons of Lent and Easter lie immediately before us. And, regretfully, this edition does not look forward to, or mention, them at all. There is a little sadness because of this. But it was not really an oversight – but simply because I wanted to concentrate on prayer – but then it came to me that congregation members are really starting to throw themselves into sharing their insights, so, wouldn't it be wonderful for us to have a retrospective edition on Lent and Easter next time where we all shared our Lenten and Easter insights and experiences.

So, there you have it. Please, as you take the Lenten and Easter journeys in 2022, take time to reflect on what touches you and then share it with us all.

So, as I sign off on another edition, I thank you for your support and involvement and encourage you to absorb into your daily schedule a time of reflection and then a willingness to share your experiences.

Have a reflective Lent and a blessed Easter

Graham

## INDEX

Editorial Comment .....	Page 1
Who's Who in the Blackall Range Churches.....	2
Liena's Lines – 22022022 – February Lament by Liena .....	3-4
Some Random Thoughts on Prayer (Bob Philpot) .....	4-5
What Jesus Prayed (Paul Tarbuck) .....	6-7
Prayer and Pastoral Care (Dorothy Tietze) .....	7
Pause for Thought (Ed.).....	8-9
Prayers (Joyce Butterfield, Margaret Pow and Marnie McCallum).....	9
Karl's Korner – Thinking about Prayer (Karl Tietze).....	10
Preparing for Prayer (Nancy Baker).....	10
Children's Page (Helen Bock).....	11
Michael Leunig (Ed.) .....	12-14
A Prayer Story (Graham Dempster).....	14
Examen (Ed.) .....	15-16
From Father Richard Rohr's Daily Devotions – Meeting God in Prayer (Robyn Robertson) – including Breath Prayer.....	16-17
Changing Times.....	17
Prayer (George Woodward) .....	18
An Omicron New Year (Helen Uhlmann) .....	19
Prayer is Hard Work (Bob Grice) .....	20
Maleny Sunday Morning Prayer Group (Ed.) .....	21-23
Vale (Ed.).....	24
Christian Meditation (Graham Dempster) .....	24-26
A Prayer (Colin Harding).....	26
My Prayer Journey – Prayer Transformed---From Duty to Delight (Helen Uhlmann) Including note from Liena.....	27-28

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## LIENA'S LINES

Liena's Lines may be found in two places in this edition. One is where she has added a comment following Helen Uhlmann's *My Prayer Journey* which outlines the plans for our year of prayer as a congregation. Then I had suggested she write a Lament to introduce us to this type of prayer. It follows and I commend it to you. Ed.

### 22022022, A February Lament by Liena

*I cry Lord -  
For a 14 year old who knows  
no other way  
than to swear and steal*

Have mercy on us Lord

*Forgive us who fail our children,  
And You*

*I cry Lord -  
For men who have the power to command  
tanks and fighter planes.*

Have mercy on us Lord

*Forgive us, Lord, for granting men such power  
are all mortals not like grass,  
Like the grass of the fields,  
Flourishing like flowers,  
who wither and fade ...*

*I cry Lord -  
For systems that compel its carers  
to work and work  
and work ...*

Have mercy on us Lord

*Forgive us Lord,  
For demanding high care*

*I cry Lord -  
For an earth that is exhausted  
drained  
flooding  
raging*

Have mercy on us Lord

*Forgive us Lord  
For our endless wants*

*I cry Lord -  
For a world  
Stumbling in the darkness*

*I cry Lord -  
For us  
living in February 2022  
Who fail to see the Light  
Who fail to recognise the Light*

Have mercy on us Lord

*"Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."  
"I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the First and the Last,  
the Beginning and the End."*

*"I, Jesus,  
have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.  
I am the Root and the Offspring of David,  
and the bright Morning Star."*

Shalom Liena



## **SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS ON PRAYER**

Some definitions to commence with:

- *Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
uttered or unexpressed.  
The motion of a hidden fire  
that trembles in the breast ... Tennyson.*
- *Prayer is the dominant desire in our lives ... Fosdick*
- *Prayer is: Being open to God. ... Philpot.*
- *Mother praying God will save your sailor  
even as your head is bowed,  
See his heavy shotted hammock shroud,  
sinks in its vast and wandering grave ... Tennyson. (A burial at sea.)*

God always acts to answer our prayers; even when the answer does not suit us.

Some experiences of the effect of prayer:

I was privileged to be with two special people not long before they died. I asked them as we concluded our conversation if they would pray for me and bring me a blessing. To this they agreed. I cannot recall the words they used at the time, but the experience has stayed with me for a long time. It was like being in the presence of God. (The people were Rev. Ozzie Dale and Rev. Ron Potter.)

Listening to Liena expand on the call of Isaiah (Is. 6:1-8) it came to me that the response we use to the question, "Who will go for us and whom shall I send?" in some cases is; "Here I am Lord. Please send someone else!"

Nine years of being a Patrol Padre in remote parts of Australia (Nth Western Queensland and the Kimberley region of Western Australia) left me searching for the ways in which prayer was used in those areas.

Personally, here is one example. I recall being only a few kms from the station I was going to visit when I became hopelessly bogged and the SBS radio I normally used to communicate had been playing up. After a brief prayer, and having slung the aerial over the highest tree I could find, I made contact with

the station and they were sending someone to assist. They arrived and had me on my way in a short time.

At home later at the conclusion of the patrol, when the cover was removed from the Radio it became obvious that a wire had become completely detached and there is no way that Radio should have worked.

For outback people, prayer when used was always backed with action on the prayer's part; sometimes in the most thought provoking way.

In one area I used to visit regularly, there was a Roman Catholic man who was very concerned about unwanted pregnancies in the Aboriginal community he had a hand in administering. His answer to such pregnancies was to develop a system where a lot of fertile women were led to take the pill. The question for me was that, was it an answer to some sort of prayer for it achieved the result he was looking for.

When time and circumstance made it possible, I took people from the wider church on patrol with me: to see the results of what they had commissioned the patrol padre for. One such person was a very active churchman from Beenleigh, who was an electrician by trade.

We were visiting Lorraine Station Nth West of Julia Creek. As with many of the larger stations, they had a large diesel generator producing electricity which had been working non-stop for five years. Ted Flamstead, the manager, had just finished telling us how reliable it was when it stopped. Attempts to restart it meant it would run for a short time and then conk out. Freezers, butcheries, houses, workshops were all dependent on the power that was no longer forthcoming.

The alternative was to start a smaller backup generator that would meet the need. In a short time, the motor was humming along well, but it would not generate. What to do?

The visitor with me said, "Have you a battery ready charged?" This was soon supplied with leads attached. He approached the alternator which was not charging and carefully applied the leads one at time. When the second lead was applied there was a loud clunk, and the alternator began charging and was able to supply the power needed. The manager was very impressed and asked what had happened. The electrician gave an answer which has intrigued me over the years. He said, " For these things to work, first sometimes you have to excite them!" Prayer or not, there is a lesson in life there. Even before some of us will pray, we need a stimulus, we need to be excited.

Another Patrol experience which needs retelling follows. A religious man from another group had visited a property I was to call on. Before visiting any station, I would always pause on the outskirts and read one of the psalms and then commit the whole visit to God in prayer. I had heard that the other visitor was not well received. When I arrived at the station proper, I was greeted by the people to say that they were glad to see me for the visit by the other person had been a disaster for he was not interested in them but just in getting donations for his organization. The resulting visit for me was one of strong fellowship and great support. As a religious person they expected you to do religious things such as lead a time of worship.

Part of the patrol work was to meet with aboriginal people who have a deep spirituality not defined by Western ways of assessment. Time is of the essence of the experience and prayer/thought is part of the process. Needing a place to meet in Broome, they asked me if they could meet under the trees in the church yard. An outcome of this was they invited me to be a part of their meetings. Males only, made up the group and ten or more of us would sit on the ground under the tree. The agendas were entirely theirs and we would sit in silence for ten minutes or so until someone spoke. Questions and discussion would follow until consensus was reached. Reason for telling this story is to highlight the meditative and prayerful way they approached decision making.

Bob Philpot



## WHAT JESUS PRAYED

In times of perplexity and confusion, we at times hear the desperate plea, "What would Jesus do?", but often this is a substitute for, "What would I want Jesus to do?" It may be far more meaningful to look at the Holy Scriptures on "What Jesus said" and be prepared for things that might make us uncomfortable. Narrowing it down, we could focus on "What Jesus prayed".

I have never really done this in detail before, so I thought I should go through the actual recorded spoken prayers and see what emerges.

Note that the gospels tell us that Jesus went into prayer on a number of occasions (over 30) for various purposes but there are just a few actual prayers from his mouth that were written down. I urge you to read these from your Bible and spend some time looking at the words, maybe reading them aloud and then trying to transfer them into today's context and ask the question, "What would Jesus pray today about the situations that surround us?"

I will attempt to put some prayers together from my own sense of need and I am basing them on Jesus' personal prayers as my model. I am deliberately omitting "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6 v 9-13) as this was a teaching tool used by Jesus to give a very succinct model for prayer.

1. A prayer of thanks to God for His revelation, modelled on Jesus' prayer in Matthew 11: 25-26 and Luke 10: 21

*Father God, help us to accept your almighty power and purpose as your adopted children and not try to fathom out the unfathomable. In faith we trust in you to make everything right.*

2. Before the raising of Lazarus (John 11:41-42)

*Dear Lord, before we even ask, you know our prayers and yet you desire to hear our requests, both in private and in public. All things are possible with you. Strengthen our belief for times when that belief is tested.*

3. Jesus' prayer after entering Jerusalem (John 12:27-28)

*Almighty God and heavenly Father, I feel an uneasiness in my spirit over many things. Yet, you are with me and will walk beside me through this valley. I pray for strength and courage from you alone. Your power and love will overcome my fears. May your name be praised forever.*

4. Jesus' prayer as intercessor and high priest (John 17: 1-26), which is his longest recorded prayer, just before his arrest.

*Abba, Father, I look up to you and seek solace in your presence. Help me to shut out the sounds and thoughts bombarding me from the world around me. Lord Jesus, you are praying with me at this time and in this place. Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son to bear my sins on that cross of shame. He knows our pain and suffering, but he also brings joy unlimited which is far more than the world can give. I pray for family and loved ones - for their safety and protection from harm and evil and deception. I pray for faithful servants who carry the gospel far and wide. May we live and serve you in the world with the joy of salvation in our hearts.*

5. Jesus' prayer of submission and sacrifice in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26: 39-44).

*Father, I often wonder if I can handle this task. Surely there is someone else who can do it or maybe it can wait until I am ready. But, Lord, you know best. However, Lord, I am still uncertain. How do I know it is your will? What seems to us to be good, is sometimes not. Shine through the darkness*

*around me, that I may understand your will. Speak to me through your holy word and help me to know your will in my life.*

6. Jesus' prayers on the cross (Luke 23: 34, Matthew 27: 46, Mark 15: 34, Luke 23: 46)

*Loving Father God, at times I find myself becoming annoyed and even angry at the unfairness, selfishness, and injustice that I see in the world. Grow in me more of an understanding and forgiving spirit. All have sinned and fallen short of your glory.*

*Oh Lord, at times I feel separated from you, but it is I who have moved away. Thank you for the love that never lets me go. You hold my days in your hands and at the end I know that I will pass from death to eternal life and indeed meet my Saviour.*

*... and I say all this in and through Jesus' name, the one who gave his life for me and prays for me, especially when all I can do is to sigh.*

Paul Tarbuck



## PRAYER AND PASTORAL CARE

Prayer is an integral part of Christian care.

Commit each day to God and ask that he will be with you in all you say or do. As the day progresses you may meet, phone, or visit someone unexpectedly or on purpose so be conscious that God is with you, and you can call on his help.

Seek to develop a listening ear and be sensitive to others' needs. They may request prayer, or you may end a visit by asking if they would like you to pray for them. This need not be daunting as you can simply talk to God about all the subjects the person has raised in your conversation, or you may make specific requests. If you still find it difficult, have a written prayer or a psalm to read.

If you think more prayer would be appreciated, seek permission before submitting their name and request to the prayer chain group.

I have never had anyone refuse a prayer and have found sharing prayer time is very special for all participants.

Romans 12:12,13

*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.  
Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

Dorothy Tietze



## PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

Wild Goose Publications is the publishing arm of the Iona Community.

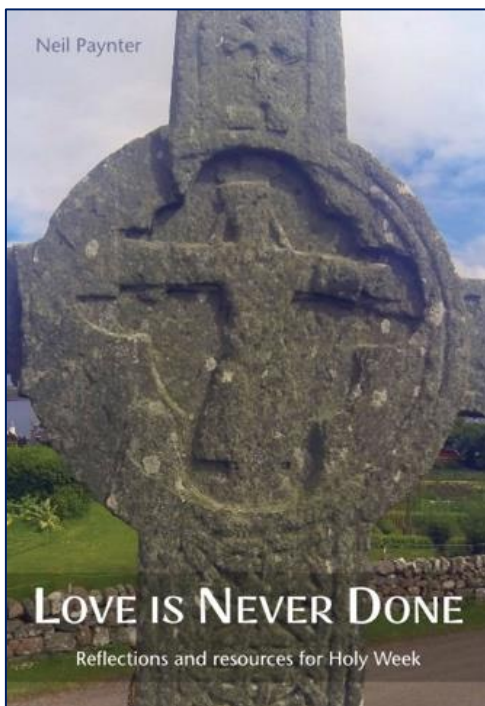


The Iona Community is:

- An ecumenical movement of people from different walks of life and different traditions in the Christian church.
- Committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to following where that leads, even into the unknown.
- Engaged together, and with people of goodwill across the world, in acting, reflecting and praying for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

It produces a whole range of material on spiritual matters – liturgies and prayers for worship; resources for each season of the church year; religious music – CD's, DVD's and printed music; study books on a range of subjects – ageing, birth, death, health, bullying, blessing etc. . These can be printed or downloaded as e books. I get my information in a weekly emailed newsletter.

On the day the request for contributions for this edition appeared in Our Common Life, my newsletter arrived, and it included an item that I thought touched on what I was looking for. So, I have included it below as, sort of, my own answer to my request. It is one prayer from a book of reflections for Easter. See what you think.



*On this day, we have seen it all.*

*Everything dies.*

*Life dies.*

*Death dies.*

*Everything is done.*

*Except love*

*Only love is not done.*

*Only love will not die.*

*Everything is finished except love.*

*Love bears all things,*

*believes all things,*

*hopes all things,*

*endures all things.*

*At some point everything will be done.*

*Except love.*

*Love is never done.*

*Martin Wroe*

Should you be interested in having a look at these publications, the website is [ionabooks.com](http://ionabooks.com)

Interestingly, I found that it has a daily reflection App too, which I am going to try. It gives a short prayer or reflection for each day, taken from their publications, which shows up on your mobile phone at the tap of an icon. You can also email the thought to friends. Their advice is:

Go to [www.ionabooks.com/m/](http://www.ionabooks.com/m/) on your phone and then make a handy icon for your phone by creating a shortcut or bookmark. To see your daily thought, just tap the icon each day.



For those without phones with an internet capability, you can view the daily thoughts on your computer by going to [www.ionabooks.com/m/](http://www.ionabooks.com/m/)

Just something a little different.



## PRAYER

*What does it mean for a Christian?  
Is it a time for an urgent request,  
or a time to reflect and pray  
and to thank our Lord every day?*

*What a privilege to be able  
to pray to God anytime,  
day or night - no matter the hour,  
God will be waiting to hear our prayers.*

Joyce Butterfield

And here's a prayer that has meant a great deal to Margaret Pow for many years. Ed.

*"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, give me light that I may tread safely into the unknown. And he replied, go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God, that shall be to you better than any light and safer than a known way."*

Author unknown

## A KEEPSAKE

Prayers come to us in many shapes, forms and purposes – and from a variety of places, but still they speak to us. Here is one such that Marnie McCallum lovingly noticed on the bedside table during her many visits to an ailing, very special aunty. When she passed, Marnie kept this as a memento. Ed.

## Exchanging a Day

*Lord, this is the beginning of a new day;  
You have given it to me to use as I will;  
I can waste it or use it for Your good.  
What I do today is very important,  
Because I'm exchanging a day of my life for it,  
When tomorrow comes this day will be gone forever,  
Leaving something in its place.  
I have traded it so I want it to be a gain --- not a loss;  
Good --- not evil; success --- not failure;  
In order that I shall not forget  
Who gave it to me to exchange .....*

## **KARL'S KORNER**

### **Thinking About Prayer**

I admit I'm ambivalent about prayer. If God knows what I need (or want), and if He judges that need/want to be in line with His plan for me, why do I have to ask? Does he somehow expect me to beg, as it were, Him to do what He would like? Or is it more about 'training' me to include His wishes in my requests? To see my needs from His perspective? That would make more sense to me.

Then there is the issue of corporate or public prayers. I find it rather pointless to pray for some things we are asked to in various settings. Our online daily Bible Study asks us to pray for the people of various countries; we are asked to pray for our leaders and governments at all levels; for world peace; for the elimination of poverty, etc., etc. I struggle with these prayers for a number of reasons, but the most obvious one is whether we can ever know if they are answered or, indeed, whether we are asking the impossible at times. I recently read some of the essays of Isaiah Berlin on the possibility of Utopia where we all live together in perfect harmony despite each having different aspirations and needs and this cast a different perspective on many of our requests. That doesn't mean we shouldn't add our pleas to those of fellow Christians when these express a heart-felt need. It's just that we can't ever know if God heard us (assuming such is ever possible anyway).

Also, we probably have all heard the joke about the Christian who prayed for a parking spot but, when one immediately appeared, told God to forget about his (her) request as he (she) had already found one. Yes, there have been situations where such trivia is asked of God although there may be unpublished urgent reasons for such calls for God's assistance. While I can't remember praying for this, I was in a great hurry once to get home in time to go out to another appointment. I was walking/running and getting rather worried when I saw a familiar car coming. I knew the lady slightly and so, in a rather humorous manner, I moved to the edge of the road and 'lifted my trouser leg'. This actually worked and I told her she was a Godsend. Was this answered prayer?

On a more serious note, I can remember being part of a Bible Study group at which a matter of concern within the church was brought to our attention. It concerned a power relationship between two church members affecting church decision making. As happens during such meetings, each of us was given the opportunity to pray and I prayed about this issue telling God I didn't know how this could be resolved but that I felt He should do something about it. My feelings were rather mixed when three days later one of them had passed away. 'Be careful what you ask for...' came to mind.

But is prayer a 'scheduled' or timed event? In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul says we should pray without ceasing. How is this possible? Perhaps we have the whole idea of prayer wrong and we should be treating our whole life as the prayer.

What do you think?

Karl Tietze



The Bible study guide booklet "*With Love to the World*" finishes daily notes with a simple one-line prayer which is usually based on the words of a hymn. Reading a hymn such as TIS 607 "Make me a channel of your peace" is a special way of preparing oneself for a time of praying at the start of each day.

Nancy Baker

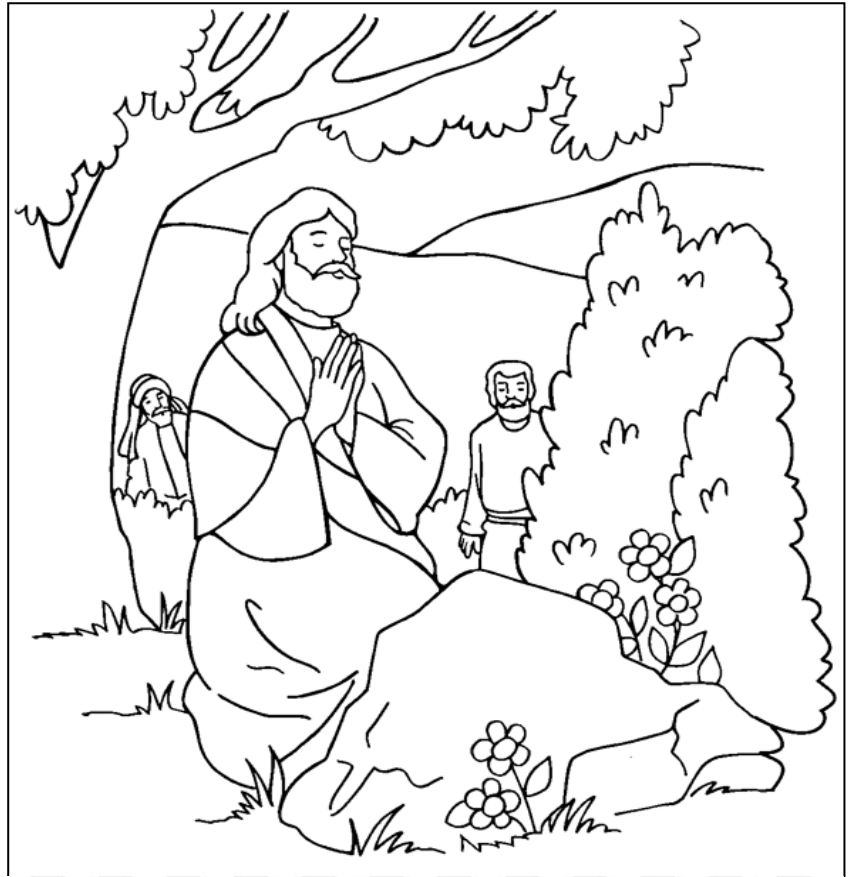


# PRAYER



To pray is simply to talk to God. Imagine a place or time when you could pray, using a word that starts with these letters: for example near a **R**iver.

Colour Jesus praying in the garden while his disciples keep watch.



**P** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_

**A** \_\_\_\_\_

**Y** \_\_\_\_\_



Each letter in this sentence has been replaced with a number. Try to decode the message by matching the letters with each number.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
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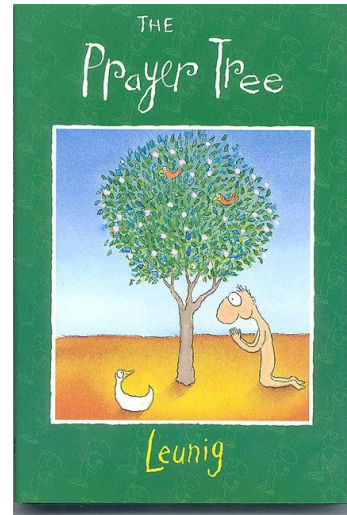
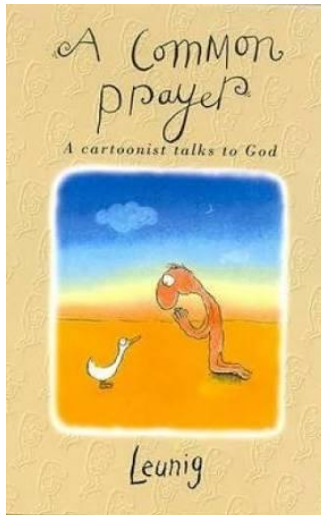
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## MICHAEL LEUNIG

I have always loved Leunig's work, both as a cartoonist and as a writer. I have had his books – *A Common Prayer* [1990] and *The Prayer Tree* [1991] since they were first published. I think that no Australian collection of prayers would be complete without reference to him – so simple, so profound. So, I have produced some of them here, from his website, for your reflection, especially for those who have not encountered his work previously.



But first a word of explanation from his website.

*I use the word 'God' conscious of the fact that there are many who may find it objectionable - and others who may find my casual use of the word too irreverent or shallow. For all sorts of reasons people can be very touchy about this word; in my view they seem either too earnest, too proprietorial, too fanatical, too averse, too phobic... There is however no ultimate authority or definition. The word is yours or mine to make of it and hold or discard it as we will... "God" as a sort of shorthand password, an inconclusive folk word, a signpost, a catalyst, a spark, a stepping stone, a simple makeshift handle ... A simple robust word used lightly and loosely or as devoutly and deeply as we might feel - a bridge, and a way to break free from this material world for a moment or two, a day or two... or for what's left of a lifetime.*

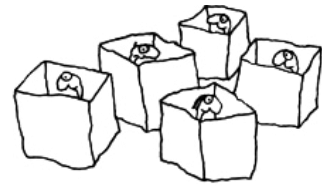
And now for some prayers. But which ones?

*God help us to change.  
To change ourselves and to change our world.  
To know the need for it. To deal with the pain of it.  
To feel the joy of it.  
To undertake the journey without understanding the destination.  
The art of gentle revolution.  
Amen*

*Love is born  
With a dark and troubled face  
When hope is dead  
And in the most unlikely place  
Love is born:  
Love is always born.*



*God bless this tiny little boat  
And me who travels in it.  
It stays afloat for years and years  
And sinks within a minute.  
And so the soul in which we sail,  
Unknown by years of thinking,  
Is deeply felt and understood  
The minute that it's sinking.*



*Dear God,  
We pray for another way of being:  
another way of knowing.  
Across the difficult terrain of our existence  
we have attempted to build a highway  
and in so doing have lost our footpath.  
God lead us to our footpath:  
Lead us there where in simplicity  
we may move at the speed of natural creatures  
and feel the earth's love beneath our feet.  
Lead us there where step-by-step we may feel  
the movement of creation in our hearts.  
And lead us there where side-by-side  
we may feel the embrace of the common soul.  
Nothing can be loved at speed.  
God lead us to the slow path; to the joyous insights  
of the pilgrim; another way of knowing: another way  
of being  
Amen*



*God bless our contradictions,  
those parts of us which seem out of character.  
Let us be boldly and gladly out of character.  
Let us be creatures of paradox and variety:  
creatures of contrast; of light and shade; creatures of faith.  
God be our constant. Let us step out of character into the unknown,  
to struggle and love and do what we will.  
Amen*

*God help us to live slowly:  
To move simply:  
To look softly:  
To allow emptiness:  
To let the heart create for us.  
Amen*

*God give us rain when we expect sun.  
Give us music when we expect trouble.  
Give us tears when we expect breakfast.  
Give us dreams when we expect a storm.  
Give us a stray dog when we expect congratulations.  
God play with us, turn us sideways and around.  
Amen*



And a piece of Leunig advice to finish.

*'Love one another and you will be happy'.  
It is as simple and difficult as that.  
There is no other way  
Amen*



## **A PRAYER STORY**

We were to leave our home in Canberra to attend Theological College in North Parramatta, Sydney for two years. We had 8 – 10 weeks maximum to effect this change. A nightmare in store. Try to sell our house? Pack up 30 years of living in the one place. What to do with furniture? Where would we live in Sydney which we knew very little about? Would we have enough money to keep us alive before, hopefully, we might have a stipend? Worthy matters for prayer.

We would spend a full day in Sydney looking at units for rent. Went to a number of agents and saw quite a few properties. Finally returned to the very first one we'd seen. It was within walking distance of the College and had two bedrooms which would allow the children to visit. One issue sorted, clearly with help. And we were on our way home soon after lunch.

Having chosen a Canberra real estate agent to sell our home, we were working through things when we received a phone call from someone who had joined the public service from the country and they asked if we knew of any places to rent while they found a new home. Great delight when we offered our place. That at least lessened the weight of all that had to be done in a hurry. We could delay the sale. We mutually agreed a rental that covered our rent in Sydney – bonus – as their rent was subsidised by the government. Win – win. More evidence of help.

But better things were to come. It did not take them long to indicate that if we were happy, they would stay for the whole two years we were in College as their needs in a new place would take time to sort out. We agreed and by so doing, had our rental covered for the whole of our training.

And, then, a week or two before we were to leave, I received a phone call from my former boss asking me if I would be available to do the odd job when at College. I didn't know but assumed it would be OK – so I said I could not see why not. I had no idea what he would want me to do, if anything. He then indicated the Prime Minister had asked that I be appointed to the Board of the Organising Committee of the Sydney Paralympics as the Commonwealth Government's representative, to which I agreed. This decision probably had more to do with ego than anything else.

However, when I attended the first meeting, I was asked to sign a whole heap of papers which, it turned out, entitled me to a fairly substantial fee for services. With my superannuation available, and this fee, our money problems were solved. This appointment only lasted for the two years I was at college as, with a change of Government, I was dropped – but by this time I had been appointed to a parish.

For us, as we journeyed towards ministry, this all reflected the power of prayer – sustained over a number of years.

Graham Dempster



## EXAMEN

It is confession time!

Here is my confession.

The bulk of the article that follows is a direct take from another source. And it is a bit sad when you start quoting your own journal, I guess. But we have done an edition on prayer before – especially addressing Covid – way back in Issue no 15, April 2020 - but as I looked at it, one article at least was, I thought, worth repeating. It was about the prayer practice called Examen.

The practice suggested was based on the five steps taught and practised by St Ignatius [1491-1556].

- 1 Become aware of God's presence
- 2 Review the day with gratitude
- 3 Pay attention to your emotions
- 4 Choose one feature from the day and pray over it
- 5 Look forward to tomorrow with prayer and thanksgiving.

Here is the repeat article for your consideration in the overall context of your prayer life.

*Finally, the Roman Catholic church has developed over time a practice they call – Examen. This is where we sit quietly at the end of the day and reflect upon what has happened, and what we have done, during the day and then commit it all to God in prayer.*

*Here are a couple that I found on the net.*

### [1] **AN EXAMEN IN CARING FOR OTHERS**

*What interactions with others were significant to me today?*

*What care and compassion did I show?*

*What was going on in my head during these interactions? Was I truly present?*

*What control do I have over the circumstances of these individuals?*

*Did I do all that I could in this point in time?*

*What can I do for tomorrow?*

### **Followed by a Prayer for Compassion**

*Merciful God,*

*Open my heart and mind to be fully present to those I interact with throughout the day.*

*Allow me to listen to others without passing judgement or haste to solve what I cannot change.*

*Give me patience and understanding and grant me grace in my shortcomings.*

*Be with me in times of fatigue and lift me up with the strength to carry out your compassionate love to all those I meet. Amen.*

- By Ashley Henkes, Hall Director, Residence Life

## [2] AN EXAMEN TO BECOME MORE LOVING

*Creator, thank you for my many blessings, especially - [name them].  
Be with me at this moment,  
and guide my thoughts to those places  
where I could have been more loving in my day  
and consider how I will improve.  
Help me to see those places where I was loving  
and strengthen those parts of me  
so that I can better do your will.  
Thank you for all the love I've been blessed with  
and help me in the moments ahead.*

- By Ellen Hurst, Senior Teaching Professor, Economics



## FROM FATHER RICHARD ROHR'S DAILY DEVOTIONS

I am aware a few people in our congregation receive these daily devotions. I was wondering if I should use a part of what they said when Robyn Robertson forwarded me a copy of the weekly summary with the comment – “FOR ME, THIS ABOUT COVERS IT ALL REALLY” – that helped me decide. So here it is – in full. Ed.

### Meeting God in Prayer, February 13 – February 18, 2022

#### SUNDAY

Prayer is not primarily saying words or thinking thoughts. It is, rather, a stance. It's a way of living *in* the Presence, living in *awareness* of the Presence, and even of enjoying the Presence. — Richard Rohr

#### MONDAY

Prayer is not primarily something we are doing to God, something we are giving to God but what God is doing for us. And what God is doing for us is giving the divine Self in love. — Ruth Burrows

#### TUESDAY

Quiet, contemplative prayer happens when we are still and open ourselves to Christ's Spirit working secretly in us, when we heed the psalmist's plea: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10). These are times when we trustingly sink into God's formless hands for cleansing, illumination, and communion. — Tilden Edwards

#### WEDNESDAY

In prayer, we know we're not being manipulated, we're not being used, we're not being judged, we're not being evaluated. Who wouldn't want to go there? It's the place of ultimate freedom. — Richard Rohr

#### THURSDAY

We can imagine God as our intimate friend, with whom we share everything. We can talk to the Divine about our needs, complaints, and difficulties. We can ask for advice, offer thanksgiving, and make acts of faith or reparation for our sins. We can seek guidance for our children, or shed tears about illness and death. — Beverly Lanzetta

#### FRIDAY

Prayer is the longing of the human heart for God. It is a yearning and desire for relationship with God, and it is God's attention to our desire: God-in-communion with us. — Ilia Delio

## Breath Prayer

*Minister Adele Ahlberg Calhoun suggests a form of breath prayer that allows us to bring our heart's deepest longing into our intimate relationship with God:*

Breath prayer reminds us that just as we can't live on one breath of air, we can't live on one breath of God. God is the oxygen of our soul, and we need to breathe [God] in all day long. After all, it is in [God] that "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Breath prayer reminds us that each breath we are given is God's gift and that God's Spirit is nearer to us than our own breath. . . .

To practice breath prayer, ponder the nearness of God. Settle deeply into the truth that Christ is in you. Deeply breathe in, repeating any name of God that is dear to you. . . . As you exhale, voice a deep desire of your heart. When you exhale, offer up the desire of your heart. The brevity of the prayer allows it to be repeated over and over throughout the day.

Examples of breath prayers are

- breathe in "Abba," breathe out "I belong to you."
- breathe in "Healer," breathe out "speak the word and I shall be healed."
- breathe in "Shepherd," breathe out "bring home my lost [ones]."
- breathe in "Holy One," breathe out "keep me true."
- breathe in "Lord," breathe out "here I am."
- breathe in "Jesus," breathe out "have mercy on me."

Anyone wanting to explore these readings further, the website is [cac.org](http://cac.org) and follow the prompts.



## CHANGING TIMES

Given Queensland does not fall prey to Daylight Saving, what I am about to say may not resonate here. But it certainly did in New South Wales and the ACT when I lived there – and there was a change-over either to or from Daylight Saving. Inevitably, when we changed back to Eastern Standard Time, someone would arrive at church just as it was finishing. They had forgotten the change over time!

When this cartoon was sent to me by Sue Callaghan, it brought back those memories.

Ring any bells?



Mrs. Jones got a little too used to watching online worship from home.

With apologies to the Mrs Joneses who are part of our congregation. I am absolutely sure this would not be any of you – but I couldn't change the print on the cartoon to another name. Will try harder next time!

## PRAYER

Merv was an 84 year old active member of his congregation. He had been an elder for over 25 years and was due for re-election. I, as his minister, was trying gently to tell him he did not have to be an elder any longer. He had served the congregation well in the role and he could now rest from the duty of being an elder in an active congregation. Merv was a little upset with my idea and told me that he got up each morning at 3 a.m. and prayed for the congregation for 3 hours. At this point in my life, I had not met any such prayer warrior and was challenged about my 10 to 15 minutes of prayer a day. I promptly assured Merv that he was welcome to continue as an elder and I would sign his nomination form.

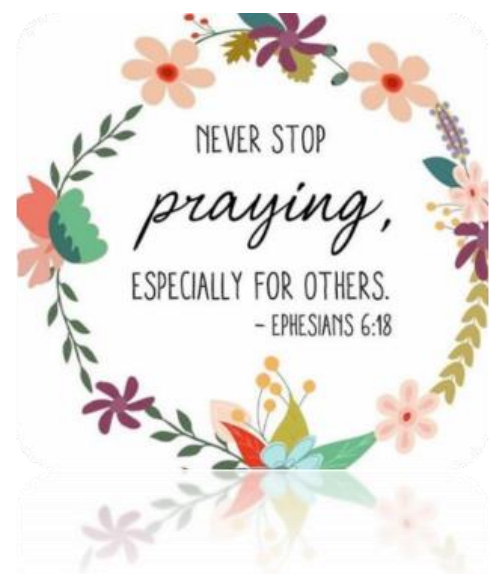
The Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 5:17 writes “pray continually.” Prayer is more than how many hours or minutes we spend talking with God each day. It is about our relationship with God. We are in a permanent relationship with God. God is our parent and we are God’s child/children. We are always in that type of close relationship with God. We can talk with God anytime. We can listen to God anytime. There are those intimate times we set aside to especially commune with God, like in our daily devotions and when we are in worship. These can occur anytime and anywhere beyond these times as well.

Prayer helps us stay in that wonderful relationship with God. Prayer also helps us grow in that relationship and understand more of God. Prayer helps us care for those we know who are in need. Prayer enables us to forgive those who have hurt us and to know the forgiveness God offers to all of us. Prayer gives us the strength to journey on in difficult, trying circumstances. Prayer restores to us the joy, hope, love, and peace that are God’s gift to us. Our relationship with God offers all that and much more. We regularly need to enter into those times of close intimacy with God, whether it is 10 minutes or 3 hours to continue to grow this wonderful relationship.

Another story to conclude. Shirley attended church at a small country congregation 8 to 10 times a year. One Christmas day service, Shirley was at the service and was obviously due to have a baby soon. I said that I looked forward to baptizing the baby in the new year. Shirley promptly informed me that she was having twins. I said that I now looked forward to baptizing the twins. When I returned from holidays 3 weeks later, I was informed that Shirley had had the babies 3 days earlier and sadly one of them had died and Shirley was not coping. I visited Shirley in the country hospital where she had given birth. The sister in charge told me that the situation was dire. Shirley was not coping and was not willing to care for the living baby. I visited Shirley and she was severely depressed. I asked her if she prayed and she said yes. I asked her to find a moment after I had left to tell God exactly how she felt. I told her it was OK to be angry with God even to blame God for her current situation. I prayed with her and told her I would be back in a few days. When I returned the same sister was on duty at the hospital and she rather excitedly asked what I had done on my previous visit because while Shirley was still sad about the death of one of her twins, she was a changed woman and was caring for her living baby in a good loving way. Shirley had entered into that intimate space with God and her life had been transformed. At the funeral of the twin that had died, Shirley had written a beautiful poem releasing that child into God’s care. At the baptism of the twin that had lived there was another piece of poetry written for the living baby and we were able to pray that God would bless this little one.

PRAY CONTINUALLY.

George Woodward





## **AN OMICRON NEW YEAR**

Written on New Year's Day amid the anxieties of the time.

*Each new year lies open...  
A blank page  
A clean slate  
A path as yet untrod.*

*Offering hope and promise  
Of life and growth  
Of learnings and experiences  
Of joys and delights that charm and enliven.*

*Looming also the shadow  
Of sorrows and struggles  
Of loss and unwanted change  
Of the sudden arrival of the unwelcome unexpected.*

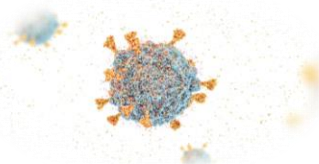
*This year feels different.  
There is foreboding  
As ground undulates under the feet.  
As we stand before a momentous unfolding  
With no plan, no certainty...  
The path ahead darkened in deep shadow.*

*Yet as I stand peering into the shadow  
There is light in this moment.  
Your presence is my light.  
Right now I can decide  
To move ahead in time's rhythm  
Knowing that the light accompanies each step.  
Illuminating each moment.*

*Aside must go  
The search for certainty;  
The analysis of past decisions  
And of decisions yet to be made;  
The questioning and second guessing.*

*This journey onward  
Unlike any other yet experienced.  
A path of conundrum -  
of letting go while holding on...  
While bathed in the light.*

Helen Uhlmann



## PRAYER IS HARD WORK

"I have been reading a recently published book on prayer by respected author Tim Keller. Keller's material is always theologically sound, rooted in the Word of God, relevant, and helpful. His book on prayer is certainly all of these things and I would recommend it to all who desire to strengthen their prayer life and ministry - but unusually for Keller, I have to confess that I have not found his book easy to read. This is partly because there is so much important material to take in, understand, reflect upon and action. However, prayer is hard work and a good book on prayer will always reflect this.



That prayer is hard work should come as no surprise to the committed follower of Jesus. Prayer was at the heart of Jesus' ministry and His example is one of faithfulness and discipline. Jesus modelled a prayer life that often involved praying all night or at least getting up before dawn to pray before distractions intruded. He climbed mountains to be alone with God and away from the ever-present crowds. He persisted in prayer while His disciples slept. So earnestly did He pray that He wept and sweated drops of blood.

The Bible records heroes of the faith such as Moses, Joshua, Daniel, Gideon, Ruth, Esther, David, Peter and Paul who wrestled with God and poured their heart out to Him in prayer. It was not always convenient, easy or comfortable, but God honoured their petitions as He continues, in His chosen time, to honour the prayers of individuals and Churches for whom prayer is not just a privilege and joy, but a responsibility which is taken very seriously.

Although I believe God hears the faltering prayer of all who would come to Him in humility and penitence in the name of Jesus, prayer for the mature Christian involves the daily setting aside of time, including preparation and thought, a sacrifice we are often reticent to embrace except when we know of those we love are in crisis. We can and should pray spontaneously at all times and in all places as God puts people and issues on our heart but intentional prayer needs the discipline of a regular time and an appropriate place where we can talk with God, listen and wait upon Him.

There are times when we do not feel like praying, when God seems far away, when the answers we want do not come immediately, when prayer is hard going and hard work. Satan fears the power of prayer and he will do all he can to suggest to us that we are too busy to pray, he will send all kinds of things to distract us, and he will even suggest that we are so insignificant or sinful that God could not possibly be interested in listening to us. Paradoxically, it is at these times that we most need to be persistent in prayer.

Satan knows that when our prayer life dries up, so does our Christian walk and witness so he will come at anything to destroy the discipline and ministry of prayer.

In conclusion, we are encouraged to bring everything to God in prayer. However, there is often a short prayer and then the real effort starts with getting on with whatever we have prayed for. I saw a suggestion in a recent Scripture Union publication that perhaps we have it round the wrong way. Perhaps prayer is the real work after which the endeavours for which we pray are so guided and blest by God that we can only stand amazed and say "Thank you Lord for what YOU are doing"

Let's therefore embrace the advice of Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians when he says, "Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ."

Yours in His Service  
Bob Grice

## **MALENY SUNDAY MORNING PRAYER GROUP**

A small group of people meet at 9.00 am each Sunday morning to pray – for all sorts of things. These include the congregations, Liena, the service to follow, the world – i.e. whatever leads us.

Recently, worship was suspended so this group, led by Helen Uhlmann, and in answer to her request on how we might function during this hiatus period, decided to write prayers that Helen could distribute and, at 9.00 am each Sunday, we sat and prayed, at home, based on the prayers submitted by the group.

This was different but very effective – we were still in communion with each other; we were able to share in the prayers of others; and we were able to reflect on what was written in a different way to normal Sundays.

In short, a very worthwhile innovation.

Here are some of the prayers used by the group.



*I pray that we will continue to enjoy fellowship with one another despite our physical absence; that all in our congregation will take heart and find ways to be faithful to our call and to connect with each other during this pandemic.*

Amen    Helen U



Based on Luke 4:14-21:

*Lord God, as we open our lives to you in prayer, we find that Jesus found a basis for his life in the words of Old Testament prophets.*

*He was living in a time of great uncertainty: Judaism was weak and the ruling Roman power was all-conquering.*

*We live in a similar time, when due to the uncertainty that we face each day, we reach out to find a new basis for life.*

*God of certainty, open our minds to see that we can anchor our souls in you and your word spoken through the prophets, so that we may find as Jesus did; a positive way forward in life.*

*We bring you this prayer through our Lord Jesus.*

Amen    Bob P



*My overarching prayer is that as a congregation(s), we become a people of prayer*

Amen    Bob G



A prayer for today based on Psalm 71: 17 - 22:

*Almighty God, I bow in adoration of you and the mighty things you have done throughout eternity. All things have come about through you and nothing takes you by surprise. Thank you for pursuing me with your love, of never letting me go, from my youth to my old age, through thick and thin, both when my faith and strength have been weak and when they have been renewed. Give me the wisdom, strength and courage to stand up for your truths and to teach my children and grandchildren of the everlasting message of your word and your lovingkindness and majesty. Your love reaches us everywhere. Through your strength, help us to be brave in the face of evil and to put aside our doubts. In our lives, we are witness to so*

*much cruelty, depravity, aggression, threat, disastrous events and personal crises affecting family and friends. We see confusion, injustice, international tensions and selfishness displayed. Almighty God, you are above all rulers and earthly powers. Comfort and reassure us with your presence. Even when we feel at our wits' end, we rest secure in your strength, which is perfected when we are at our weakest. May we praise and give thanks to you with every breath that is within us and make a joyful and confident song of praise to you with every step we take.*

Amen Paul



*God of the journey we call life.*

*Remind us that we come to you in this journey day by day and step by step and that each movement is of the greatest importance.*

*When we would try and speed up the process, grant us your grace and serenity so that we savour each moment and enjoy the glimpses*

*we have of your majestic presence and learn to praise you at that time.*

*Many persons and many experiences are used by you to enrich our lives on this journey: help*



*us to relish them in their uniqueness,*

*even as we are shaped by the uniqueness of having Jesus as our Lord.*

Amen Bob P

*Free me o' Lord, in this disruptive season, so that I will remain focused on caring for the other. With all the uncertainties that is Covid, I am being pressed and harried and worried. During this season of anxiety and fear, Jesus come and remind me again to seek your kingdom and God's righteousness. Give me O' Lord the courage and the imagination to refresh the ways of being human together.*

Amen Peter



Dear Lord

*Today I bring before you people who live alone*

*Without a 'significant other' close by*

- \* *Those whose life has turned inwards*
- \* *Those who have no one to talk to about Covid and other fears*
- \* *Those not connected digitally with the world*
- \* *Those without shared faith moments*
- \* *Those who experience love only at a distance*
- \* *Those who have no one to scratch their back or the other 'itches' life brings*
- \* *Those whose movements are somehow restricted*
- \* *Those unable to share - a meal, a movie, a joke, the household chores, a concern, a doubt*
- \* *Those who fear the alternatives to living this way*

*Lord, may you be their comforter*

*Please show us how to be as Christ to them.*

*And I pray, too, for those who are in relationships - but still live alone*

*Because of illness, dementia, bitterness, estrangement, or some other circumstance.*

*Lord, may you be their comforter*

*Please show us how to be as Christ to them.*

*We know that, with you, we are blessed as we are never alone.*

*May this become the case for all people*

*Thank you, Lord*

Amen Graham



*Lord, we're mindful of those we know who are in nursing homes and isolating in their rooms, cut off from loved ones and visitors, unable to hear on the phone or through masks. We mourn with them and ask that they may know your loving presence at this time. We think especially of Vi Christie who has just moved into respite at Caloundra. Give her your peace. We uphold the carers, cleaners, and all other staff who are working to provide care under these trying circumstances. Lord, have mercy.*

Amen

Helen



*Holy One, we are here.*

*In this pandemic we are eager to discern your will for us and to grow in our faith.*

*In this pandemic open our minds so that we can explore new ideas and dare to dream new dreams.*

*In this pandemic open our ears to drink in the experience, wisdom and feelings of others.*

*In this pandemic open our hearts so that we can be moved in unexpected, fresh ways.*

*In this pandemic we realise it is very easy to slip into complacency and just coast along, so we ask you to use your Word with us today to heal our wounds and trouble our hearts where we have become too comfortable.*

*In this pandemic, help us to be powerful doers of your word and not just hearers only.*

Amen

Peter U

[Acknowledgment: material adopted from a prayer of Elsa Tamez]



*Loving God, there are many folk who will put their head on their pillow this night who are sick, in pain, hurt, grieving, worried, fearful, rejected, lonely or sad. I do not know their names but you do. You know their circumstances and what it is that will keep them awake or trouble their sleep tonight. I know you care.*

*Please encourage them by the power of your Spirit to turn to you, to lay their burdens at your feet and to know the peace and comfort that only you can give.*

*In Jesus name I ask this.*

Amen

Bob G





## VALE

I wanted to share two prayers readers may find useful if faced with the situation of being with a family at the time of someone dying. It is a time of deep emotion and those present may just want a prayer of comfort for themselves at their loss. Some simply request the reading of a particular psalm or some other scripture. But I have found the two prayers below do more than that – they include the person dying.

They are taken from *Uniting in Worship 2* and I have used them on many occasions – sometimes I have read them as they are, while at others using the thoughts they express in a prayer developed on the spot. Either way, they do bring comfort and re-assurance.

*Heavenly Father,  
your son Jesus Christ commended his spirit  
into your hands at his last hour.  
Into those same hands  
we now commend your servant [Name],  
that death may be for him/her the gate to life  
and to eternal fellowship with you;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen*

and

*Go forward, [Name], on your pilgrim journey,  
in the name of the Father  
who created you;  
in the name of Jesus Christ  
who died and rose for you;  
in the name of the Holy Spirit  
who strengthens you.  
May you have communion with all the saints in light;  
may you rejoice with the whole company of heaven;  
may your portion this day be peace,  
and your dwelling place the heavenly Jerusalem.  
Amen*



## CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Christian meditation is a way of prayer deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and has its wellsprings in simplicity, silence, and stillness. e.g. Matt. 6:6; Eph.3: 14-19; Luke 17: 20-21; and from the psalms – ‘Be still and know that I am God’.

Fr. Gerry Pierse describes learning to meditate as like learning a language. We may need some initial rationale but then those who learn quickest – like children – are those who immerse themselves in the language, without reference to any rationale. Meditation is not primarily a rational process, but an experiential one.



Church lives often expect much doing. Could I suggest, perhaps ‘over-doing?’ Church commitments can add another layer of stress to already complex and overloaded lives. In some, it is an obsession and calls out for examination. The gospel does not hold out any expectation that we must be constantly active, busy about doing God’s work. In fact, there is strong teaching about balance – note the Mary and Martha story; and Jesus himself after the day of ministering to and feeding 5,000 men and others, sent his disciples off and went up into the mountains alone to pray. Keeping the

balance. But for whatever reason, keeping this balance of service and prayer and the teaching that meditation is for everyone, not just monastics or clergy, have been largely lost, repressed, or denied over the centuries. Thank God for the recovery in recent times of the practice.

It is a reality in our day, that many westerners crave a deeper spiritual life. There is an awareness of a gap, a need for connectedness, wholeness, for nourishment of the spirit. Christian meditation opens a doorway to a return to faith or to discovery of same, to the growth in self-knowledge that is a prerequisite to deeply encountering God. Augustine puts it this way, *“man must first be restored to himself, that, making in himself as it were, a stepping stone, he may rise thence and be borne up to God.”*

The theology of this way of prayer is rooted in scripture: Matt 5:3; Luke 9: 23; 1 Cor. 3:16; Acts 17: 28. Poverty of spirit, leaving self behind, uncovering the indwelling spirit of God, recognising Christ is our centre. And this is the central message of Christian Meditation, **return to the centre** – as though walking a labyrinth where we are drawn in towards the centre, a metaphor for the journey of the heart we make in meditation. Frustrations and obstacles may meet us on the way. Catherine of Sienna understood about this and offered the encouragement, as we persist in our pilgrimage, *‘all the way to heaven is heaven, because Jesus is the way.’* John Main, the one who recovered for us the 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian tradition of meditation, calls it *a pilgrimage to our own heart*.

The story of the recovery of this almost lost treasure is a remarkable one. John Main, law graduate and diplomat, had discovered Eastern meditation, the simple practice of reciting a mantra twice a day, when he was stationed in Malaysia. He returned to England, taught international law for some time then joined the Order of St Benedict. His novice master worked to dissuade him from his practice of meditation, and he experienced some bleak years spiritually. Then he encountered the teachings of the 4<sup>th</sup> century desert fathers and mothers. The conferences of John Cassian, a written account of seven years spent in Egypt absorbing the wisdom of these pilgrims, were like a flash of halogen enlightenment for him. He devoted the rest of his life to teaching this recovered practice of Christian Meditation, the tradition of ‘pure prayer’, based on the simple repetition of ‘a little word’, and founded on the rich sources of our own scriptures and theology.

The word, *formula* used by John Cassian, that, *‘keeps our attention on the Lord, not on ourselves,’* has been translated by John Main into *mantra*. And when we meditate, this mantra may be the one used by the desert fathers, *‘Come to my help, O God; Lord, hurry to my rescue.’* [Ps. 62; 2] or the Jesus prayer of the Eastern church, *‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,’* or *‘maranatha’* an important prayer for early Christians in the language spoken by Jesus, meaning ‘Come Lord’, which is the one recommended by John Main. Whatever mantra we choose, its purpose is to clarify and unify the mind by freeing it from distractions. The mantra seeks to bring us to a state of alert stillness – not a familiar place to be for westerners. The task of meditation is to bring all our mobile and distracted minds to stillness. When thoughts do distract, we just return to the mantra, gently and silently repeating it. By silencing our thoughts, we are able to leave self behind and attend to God. An interesting outcome of working towards the mind’s clarity is a resulting charity towards neighbours – Jesus’ – “Love God, love neighbour, love self,” working out in actuality

A powerful and much to be desired outcome of the practice of Christian Meditation is that it leads naturally into a sense of unity with other Christians. Denominational ‘labels’ lose significance. By its very nature this ‘prayer of the heart’ leads us into obedience to Jesus’ wish, John 17: 21.

*[This is the text of a talk given by Rev Adrienne Dempster to the School for Meditators, Mount Street Benedict Centre, Sydney in September 2006.]*

#### Note from the Editor:

As the article points out, meditation is experiential. Should anyone wish to try it, a group, established by Adrienne in 2010, still meets at the Maleny Church each Wednesday at 8.30 am. We are always finished by 9.30 am. You would all be most welcome. There are no obligations.

Here is the prayer with which we start each session.

*Calm me Lord as you calm the storm  
Still me Lord, keep me from harm  
Let all the tumult within me cease  
And calm me Lord in your peace.*



### **A PRAYER**

*I had a call from God today  
He said, "How are you going?"  
I said, "Oh, not too bad.  
I'm battling on OK."*

*And then he said, "What's bothering you?  
You do not seem at peace."  
I said, "It is so hard to understand  
My life and where it leads."*

*"Why don't we chat about it?"  
God said in a pleasant voice.  
"I may be able to give advice  
On what is troubling you."*

*And then I told my God  
The secrets of my soul  
The secrets told to no one else  
But comforting to tell.*

*God said. "I will help  
to overcome your fears.  
I give advice - but it's up to you  
To use the advice I give."*

*And Prayer is the comforting talk with God  
That time we are together alone  
The peace that fills your soul  
The comfort that Friendship brings.*

Colin Harding



## MY PRAYER JOURNEY

### PRAYER TRANSFORMED---FROM DUTY TO DELIGHT

#### God delights in our prayers and invites us to delight in Him

Taking on leading the prayer ministry of our church was a scary challenge as I felt myself to be a poorly equipped charlatan and fraudster! Stepping out in this way, though, has been a great time of blessing and growth for me; a time when God had led me on a journey whereby my concept of prayer has been transformed and I have received a taste of the joy and blessing of prayer and stepped away from the dutiful and onerous approach which has dogged my prayer life in the past. But first a disclaimer – I see myself not as a saint but as a ragamuffin, taking early stumbling steps along this path – at times faithful and diligent; at other times distracted and bumbling. However, one thing I do know ... that my heavenly father waits with open welcoming arms to spend this blessed time with me. When I stumble in neglect and forgetfulness, I can turn back to Him and make a fresh start. That's the wonder of God's love and grace ... a fresh start possible at each moment of each day and I avail myself of this proffered grace constantly. Here's what I've learned (or relearned) about prayer...

- **It's fundamental.** As God's people *it is fundamental that we are a people of prayer*. Prayer is assumed to be part of a believer's life in both the New and Old Testaments; in Jesus' teaching and in the epistles.
- **It's foundational.** Prayer is the foundation to all that we might seek to do to advance God's kingdom. To talk about all manner of action with respect to our ministry, work and witness as a church is to set out on a journey in a vehicle without a motor if prayer is neglected. We need to take the time to be changed, shaped, inspired and directed to be the people God needs us to be as we partner with God to fulfil His mission.
- **It's relational.** Prayer is about our *relationship* with our Heavenly Father who loves us passionately and unreservedly; who treasures us; weeps over and with us; delights and rejoices with us.
- **We're welcome.** We are *invited* and *welcomed* to pray – to lament, to question, to praise, to argue, to make requests confidently and repeatedly, to meditate and to reflect.
- **We're blessed.** As believers, we are *blessed* and *transformed* as we pray.
- **It's a delight.** A *change of perspective* is needed for a healthy prayer life – from duty to delight; from guilt to desire
- **It's genuine, honest and true.** We are free to bring our *true selves* to the One who loves us perfectly. God knows us inside and out. Prayer is as simple as talking to Him; opening our hearts and speaking about what's there including our concerns, sorrows, hopes, confusion, shame, guilt, fears and anxieties. We need to move away from "shoulds" and formulas.
- **It's for good.** Prayer is for *our good and God's good*.
- **It's uniting.** Prayer allows us to *stand with God's people* everywhere in bringing the "big issues" to him; standing together before Him in unity.

#### LIENA'S NOTE:

And it is my prayer, that others, like me will be inspired by Helen's prayer journey and that we may also be transformed from duty to delight in our prayer life.

As a congregation we will be invited to focus upon and participate in several initiatives to inspire and encourage us on our prayer journey:

- This Edition of the *New Vine* focussing on prayer. A special thank you to Graham for initiating this *New Vine* on prayer. May each of us be blessed whilst praying through the pages.
- *Lent 2022. A Collection of Prayers.* Everyone is invited to join the leadership in intentional and intense prayer during Lent. A collection of prayers will be available for use during Lent. There will be an opportunity for prayer on Ash Wednesday, 2 March after meditation until 12 noon. You are also invited to join me in prayer each day between 5-6am and 5-6pm at the amphitheatre/along the amphitheatre side verandah of the church hall during Lent.
- *Testimony.* Persons will be invited during Sunday worship services to give testimony as to how prayers have inspired, encouraged, transformed them, or to share a prayer. Also, to share these stories in *Our Common Life*.
- *Week of Prayer.* Our week of prayer will follow after Pentecost Sunday on the 5th June and run from Monday the 6th to Saturday the 11th June. The theme is *Praying the Psalms for dear life* and there will be opportunity for individual and collective prayer during that week. Again, an invitation to intentionally embark on a journey to renew our prayer life, individually and collectively as a congregation, so that we may be transformed and take delight in our prayer-life.

Shalom Liena



For Jesus, prayer seems to be a matter of *waiting in love*. Returning to love. Trusting that love is the deepest stream of reality. That's why prayer isn't primarily words; it's primarily an attitude, a stance, a *modus operandi*. That's why Paul could say, "Pray always." "Pray unceasingly." If we read that as requiring words, it is surely impossible. We've got a lot of other things to do. We can pray unceasingly, however, if we find the stream and know how to wade in its waters. The stream will flow through us, and all we have to do is keep choosing to stay there.

Fr Richard Rohr, Daily devotions, 13 February, 2022.



"Most of our prayer lives could do with a tune up.

Some prayer lives lack consistency \_\_\_\_ Others of us need sincerity \_\_\_\_ Still others lack, well, honesty.

We honestly wonder if prayer makes a difference \_\_\_\_ Our prayers may be awkward \_\_\_\_ Our attempts may be feeble.

But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."

Max Lucado in a daily calendar, 12 February, 2022.

