

ST NINIAN'S POLLOKSHIELDS
TIME TO PRAY
WK 2: PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH

Last week, in answer to the question, *what is prayer*, I offered the answer *Prayer is the exploration of a relationship*. Prayer is the way we explore the loving and accepting relationship God already has with us in Jesus Christ. On that occasion I was talking about what we might call individual or personal prayer – what we pray, how we pray, in the privacy of our own place and space. And I hope you have been able to explore that during the past week with the help of the little yellow leaflet handed out last Sunday.

However, none of us is simply an individual, entire in ourself. We are individuals with relationships, our lives are bound up with other people. Above all, as Christians, our lives are bound up with the church, the people of God, the body of Christ. We are not and cannot be Christians on our own – though the way we sit scattered all over this building might lead one to suppose we thought we could be! We are Christians *praying together, exploring our relationship with God together*.

Christians praying together. Obviously this is what happens at the eucharist, but it is also what happens day by day at Morning and Evening Prayer, the daily prayer of the church, what we call in the Anglican tradition Common Prayer, prayer together. The basic prayer of the church is just that – daily matins and evensong, one of the greatest glories of the Anglican tradition.

So, if we want to pray with the church, we need to have a clear idea of what this prayer is. It is, of course, the church's way of exploring its relationship with God, its nature as the body of Christ, its way of reflecting on that, and of offering constant praise for it. It has evolved over many centuries; in our own

tradition it has come down to us from the work of Thomas Cranmer in the sixteenth century. The first thing about it is therefore that it is a *gift*. It is all there – pattern and words are given to us. We don't have to find our own words, or invent our own order, we just have to share in what is given to us – it is something we can rest reflectively into. Secondly, it is about praying the bible – morning and evening prayer consists almost entirely of psalms, bible canticles and bible readings. So it is strongly focussed on the story of God's faithfulness to us in Jesus Christ, the greatest gift of all. Thirdly, it is about joining in with Christians all over the world, and beyond this world, in the worship and praises of God, for this prayer is a prayer of worship, a prayer when we know we are not on our own.

On today's card you will find a very simple form of daily morning and evening prayer, the prayer of the church. It is designed to encourage attentive prayer. The words are few, and are meant to be recited slowly, quietly and reflectively. Using them, our prayer becomes the prayer of Christ's people, the prayer of the church: the prayer of Christ's people, the prayer of the church becomes our prayer. The psalms and readings are selected from those that will be used in church this week. So, let me pray you, as it were, through the first part, including a psalm, and ending with the collect.

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I hope you noticed the rhythm of that – measured and reflective. If you can take some time to do this morning and evening that would be great. You might want to link it either in the morning or the evening to the kind of praying we were talking about last week – perhaps praying this at the end of your personal prayer time or before it.

In our own church's short forms of morning and evening prayer – the wee green bookie – the compilers say this, with which I want to end: *this [prayer of the church] is very ancient and has therefore been tested through long Christian experience. It is offered here in simple form in the hope that it may encourage all who use it to “keep on praying and not to lose heart”.*

TIME TO PRAY
WEEK 2: PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH

Even when we choose to pray on our own, our prayers are part of a wider pattern of response to God. When we pray, we join in the prayers of the whole church and add our voice to creation's praise. Sometimes, it helps to remember this wider pattern, and use forms of prayer which are simply given to us. Set prayers give a structure for our time with God, and ground us in scripture and tradition. This week, the pattern of prayer is a very short form of the Daily Office. If you would like a longer version, do turn to the Prayer Book, or some other form of daily prayer.

Suggested Psalms & Readings:

	Morning	Evening
Monday	Ps. 47, 150 2 Tim 1.1-14	Ps. 8, 9 Matt 10.26-33
Tuesday	Ps. 62, 146 2 Tim 2.1- 13	Ps.11,12 Matt 10.34-11.1
Wednesday	Ps. 113 Tim 2.14-26	Ps. 127, 128 Matt 11.2-15
Thursday	Ps. 24, 148 Tim 3	Ps. 98 Matt 11.16-24
Friday	Ps. 25 2 Tim 4.1-18	Ps. 27 Matt 11.25-30
Saturday	Ps. 145, 149 James 1.12-18	Ps. 34 Matt 12.1-8

Morning Prayer

O Lord open our lips:
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise
Glory be to the Father...

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands *
 serve the lord with gladness
 and come before his presence with a song.
Know this: the Lord himself is God*
 he himself made us and we are his,
 we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
Glory to the Father...

Psalm

Reading

Benedictus

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel *
 for he has come to his people & set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty saviour *
 born of the house of his servant David.
Through his holy prophets he promised of old *
 that he would save us from our enemies, from
 the hands of all that hate us.
He promised to show mercy to our forebears *
 and to remember his holy covenant.
This was the oath that he swore to our father Abraham
 to set us free from the hands of our enemies.
Free to worship him without fear *
 holy and righteous in his sight
 all the days of our life.
You, my child, shall be called the prophet
 of the most high *
 for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation *
 by the forgiveness of all their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God *
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness & the
shadow of death *
and to guide our feet in the way of peace.
Glory to the Father & to the Son & to the Holy Ghost
as it was in the beginning, is now
and shall be forever. Amen.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy

Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name
your kingdom come
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us today
our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us
Do not lead us into temptation
but deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are
restless till they find their rest in you: teach us to offer ourselves in your
service that here way may have your peace and in the world to come,
may see your face. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Evening Prayer

O God make speed to save us
O Lord make haste to help us
Glory be to the Father...

Lord you have searched me and known me*
you know my sitting down and my rising up,
you discern my thoughts from afar.

Psalm

Reading

Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord *
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
For he has looked with favour on his lowly servant *
from this day all generations will call me blessed.
The Almighty has done great things for me *
and Holy is his name.
He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones *
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things *
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant, Israel *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy.
The promise he made to our forebears *
to Abraham and his children forever.
Glory to the Father & to the Son & to the Holy Ghost
as it was in the beginning, is now
and shall be forever. Amen.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy

Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name
your kingdom come
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us today
our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us
Do not lead us into temptation
but deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

Lighten our Darkness, Lord we pray
and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this
night; for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the Love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.