

ST. PHILIP'S MILFORD PRAYER CIRCLE



Prayers for empathy, compassion and understanding for our fractious world, communities & relationships

Thursday, January 23, 2025

READER: *As we begin this Prayer Circle, we acknowledge that we gather on the unceded territory of the Mississauga people, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Haudonosaunee, Algonquin and Huron Wendat People. May we honour the Indigenous stewards of this land, and work to grow in right relationship with all Indigenous peoples. We recognize that our Creator God moves us forward together in healing, respect, and unity for future generations.*

READER: With the recent election in the United States, the fragile cease-fire in the middle east, it feels like the level of distress, anxiety, disagreement, misunderstanding, misinformation, half-truths, and misinterpretation in the world seems palpable. And all this may, in some cases, lead to breakdowns in communication, in relationship, in community. We won't be able to solve all these issues and concerns, but the good news is that it is not for us to find solutions. Today, we bring our concerns, sadness, heartbreak, and sorrow to God, in prayer.

READER: The news we hear or watch seems so disjointed from our call to Love One Another. The world, God's world, appears very fractious, with our hearts and minds feeling overwhelmed by the immense challenges affecting people and communities, all around the world, as well as our own community and loved ones. We will take this opportunity today to uphold in prayer the need for empathy, kindness, consideration and compassion. Let us quiet our hearts as we prepare to hold all this up to God.

(pause)

READER: Our Father God is sovereign over all. He is good. He is powerful. He is filled with compassion. So, let's turn to Him in faith, casting our cares upon Him with persistence and thanksgiving, remembering all the ways He has helped us in the past. We know God hears our prayers, and we know He can do more than we ask or imagine.

(pause)

READER: Our Psalm for today is 46

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
 an ever-present help in trouble.
- ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
 and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
- ³ Though its waters roar and foam
 and the mountains quake with their surging.
- ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
 the holy place where the Most High dwells.
- ⁵ God is within her, she will not fall;
 God will help her at break of day.
- ⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
 he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
- ⁷ The Lord Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress.
- ⁸ Come and see what the Lord has done,
 the desolations he has brought on the earth.
- ⁹ He makes wars cease
 to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
 he burns the shields with fire.
- ¹⁰ He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
 I will be exalted among the nations,
 I will be exalted in the earth."
- ¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress.

ALL: God our strength, your power is for peace, and the pride of your mighty acts secures the city of the humble. Teach us to put our trust in your salvation. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour. AMEN

READER: Our New Testament Reading is from 1 Peter, Chapter 3, starting at Verse 8 – Suffering for Doing Good:

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

READER: They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do

good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.”

READER: But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

READER: For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

READER: In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. This is the word of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

READER: Intercessory Prayers for Kindness & Consideration:

Compassionate God,
You have compassion enough for all.

**ALL: Lord in your mercy,
Have compassion for us.**

Jesus, out of your compassion for us,
you invite us to come away with you
to a place of rest and quiet.
Help us to say yes and then
to be able to come away with you.

**ALL: Lord in your mercy,
Have compassion for us.**

Lord, out of your compassion you care for
Those who are harassed, helpless, and
Lost. Sometimes we feel that way ourselves

ALL: Lord in your mercy, Have compassion for us.

Lord in your compassion teach us to follow you,
to trust you, to love you and to love as you love.

**ALL: Lord in your mercy,
Have compassion for us.**

Lord in your compassion feed us who are hungry;
Physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
Lord in your compassion heal us in the places we need healed.

**ALL: Lord in your mercy,
Have compassion for us.**

And Lord in your having compassion for us
Teach us to have compassion for others as you do.
Help us to show compassion in action the way you did.

**ALL: Lord in your mercy,
Have compassion for us¹.**

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour

ALL: AMEN

READER: Our Gospel Reading from John Chapter 3, starting at the 18th verse:

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

ALL: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

The Gospel of Christ

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

READER: We uphold to you, oh Lord, Our Prayers for Empathy:

Lord, we pray for compassionate hearts. Help us to be more understanding and empathetic towards others. Let us see the world through the eyes of those who are suffering and be moved to action. May our compassion lead us to help and support those in need.

ALL: AMEN
(pause)

READER: Lord God, when we pray with compassion for others, we seek to understand their viewpoint, understand their struggles, possibly place ourselves in their shoes. Lord, help us to empathize with those with whom we disagree, and through lifting our concerns to you Lord, help us to connect ourselves with them.

ALL: AMEN
(pause)

READER: Lord, thank you for your compassion towards us. Help us to reflect that same compassion in our interactions with others. May we learn to listen deeply and to respond with kindness and care to those who are hurting. Guide us to be patient and non-judgmental,

¹ re:worship.blogspot.com/2012/06

recognizing the struggles and challenges that others face. Help us to extend compassion to ourselves, understanding that we too are deserving of care and kindness.

ALL: AMEN
(pause)

READER: Lord God, we pray for a world where compassion is the norm, where people look out for one another and support each other in times of need. Thank you for your guidance in practicing compassion. Help us to seize those moments and to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

ALL: AMEN
(pause)

READER: We uphold to you, oh Lord, Prayers for Right-Relationships:

READER: All-powerful God, you are present in the vastness of the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

ALL: AMEN

READER: O Lord, you who do not look away from the pain of this world, open our eyes, we pray, to see the pain of our neighbor and, by your grace, become the healing presence and power of Jesus to them. We pray this in the name of the Merciful One, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

ALL: AMEN

READER: God of strength, help us not to fear the future but to boldly trust that you are in control when we are in despair. And at the times when we don't know what to say, help us to "Be still, and know that you are God". Be our comforter, our healer and bring us peace. In Jesus' name we pray.

ALL: AMEN

READER: Heavenly Father, we praise you for your promises of steadfast love, daily mercies, and doing the impossible, for we need all three. With your steadfast love for us, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we have incomparable peace. Because of your daily mercies to each of us, guide us to be vulnerable.

ALL: AMEN

READER: Lord God, bless us with the wisdom to seek understanding in our interactions with others. Help us to put aside our preconceived notions and truly listen to different perspectives and experiences. Guide us in embracing diversity and learning from those who are different from us. Open us up to the opportunity to grow and connect through understanding. We pray for the humility to always seek understanding in our relationships.

ALL: AMEN

READER: God of patience, grant us the gift of open ears, to truly listen to those around us without distraction or judgment. Help us to hear not only the words spoken, but also the emotions and intentions behind them. Guide and strengthen us to be present and attentive in our conversations, withholding judgement and conclusions. Help us to not confuse someone's

point of view and opinions with their humanity. We pray for the strength to connect with others through active listening.

ALL: AMEN

READER: In Closing, a Guidance for Hearts of Mercy²:

In [Ephesians 4:32](#), Paul links his call to forgiveness with a call to tender-heartedness and kindness (“be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another”).

God doesn’t merely call us to practice forgiveness—he calls us to practice a particular quality of forgiveness marked by warmth, joy, and the aroma of the gospel (“as in Christ God forgave you”).

Praying for a heart of mercy does not mean we lay aside legal redress or accountability for future wrongdoing. But it does mean we desire reconciliation and fellowship more than winning; that we seek to redirect evil and look for pathways by which to turn it to good; that we absorb pain in order to aim at restoration and peace. “A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” ([James 3:18](#))

ALL: AMEN

READER: Unite us in the Lord Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who has taught us to pray, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.
AMEN**

² Gavin Ortlund (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary)