



PRAYING *the*

Accompanying curriculum for the
PRAYING THE COLLECTS OF THE BCP
Video Series

COLLECTS *of* **BCP** 



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST



August 30, 2018

Fellow apostles,

Last Spring our diocese participated in the Good Book Club, a church-wide study of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Many of you followed along individually, and several churches did so in small groups. More than a few of you asked if the diocese might try to develop more such offerings.

The following curriculum is our response to that request. Titled *Praying the Collects of the BCP*, what follows is a 12 week curriculum exploring twelve collects from The 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Together with members of the diocesan staff, we have selected a variety of prayers that will offer you a glimpse into the beautiful tapestry of prayer found in our prayer book. For each collect, we will give you scriptural references, a bit of background about the prayer and its author, and we will leave you with a few questions for discernment and dialogue.

Why this topic? If you were to pull out a prayer book from the pews of most churches, you would find a thin strip of discolored pages. These well-worn pages represent the pages most used, The Holy Eucharist. However, this portion is but a fraction of the vast treasure of prayer found between the covers of our prayer book. Moreover, our prayers are formed explicitly and implicitly from themes, images and phrases from the Bible. So to study our prayers is to also study scripture.

Prayer is such an important part of our life with God. Prayer is an essential way by which we are shaped into the very life of God sent out "to do the work God has given us to do." On behalf of my colleagues, we give you this resource as a means by which you might continue to pursue, as our presiding bishop Michael Curry puts it, the way of love. If you discover something new, or encounter God in a deeper way, I would love to hear about it.

May God make of your study more than you can ask or imagine,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russell".

+Russell

A note on scholarship:

Unless noted otherwise, please know that much of the work on the background of the collects is drawn and quoted directly from the source:

Hatchett, Marion J. *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE CURRICULUM

The Rt. Rev. Russell Kendrick is the fourth bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Raised an Episcopalian in the same diocese he now serves, he calls Fort Walton Beach his home. After an eight year career as an architect in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Russell attended seminary at Virginia Theological Seminary. He served as curate at the Church of the Nativity, Dothan, Alabama, before heading 'north' to the Diocese of Atlanta, and then to the Diocese of Alabama. One of Russell's great passions is teaching. "I love to teach, and I have missed this part of ministry in my position as bishop. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this project."

The Rev. Joy Harrell Blaylock serves as priest in charge at Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Mobile, Alabama, and as dean for The School for Ministry in this diocese. Joy grew up in Mobile, and describes herself as passionately ecumenical. Her studies include: a B.A. in Psychology at University of South Alabama; M.A. in Theology at Spring Hill College; and Ph.D. in Systematic Theology/Psychology at The Catholic University of America. Joy attended seminary at Lutheran Southern Seminary and was ordained in 2010. Joy has served as pastor to Lutheran and Methodist congregations, taught as an adjunct instructor of theology at Spring Hill College, and officially joined the Episcopal Church in 2017. "I enjoy teaching, learning and discerning our corporate discipleship opportunities for the future."

The Rev. Canon Massey Gentry has perhaps the dubious honor of having served as canon to the ordinary to three different bishops in two different dioceses. He has served parishes in the dioceses of Alabama, Nevada, Texas, and currently serves the best small parish along the Central Gulf Coast - St. Peter's, Bon Secour, Alabama. He and Jan will have been married 50 years this year and are thankful for their children and grandchildren.

Jennifer Johnson is the missioner for communications in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Jenn joined the bishop's staff four years ago, and has served her current role since 2016. Two things she most appreciates about her work are the ability to share stories of God at work in the world and to meld her spiritual life with her vocation. Jenn has a degree in biology, and believes her connection to the scientific world has deepened her faith in the holy mystery of God and creation. She attends St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Pensacola, Florida, but also enjoys attending other churches on occasion to experience a variety of worship spaces. Jenn is about to begin her second year of Education for Ministry.

The Rev. Kathryn Mary (Kammy) Young is the canon missioner for development: evangelism and mission engagement for the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Having lived in almost ten states across the country through the years, home has primarily been the Diocese of Florida for 40 years, serving as parish priest there for 20 years. She served on the faculty of The School of Theology, Sewanee, Tennessee, over the past seven years in contextual theology and now proudly calls Pensacola, Florida, home. "Practicing resurrection - living our lives in loving and powerful ways that follow Jesus' pattern of following God's mission of turning error into truth, sin into righteousness, and death into life - is my dream for the church in this new era of being the church today, and the prayers I chose inspire that in me and others, I hope."

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Accompanying videos for each week are posted at www.diocgc.org/praying-the-collects.

WEEK 1 “Be Still” FOR QUIET CONFIDENCE, Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*




If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This prayer was composed by the Rev. John Suter, Jr. [1890-1997]. It was first printed in a book of collects in 1919 and later added to the 1928 Prayer Book. Thus, this collect is an example of the ongoing development of the prayer book. It incorporates phrases from Isaiah 30:15 and Psalm 46:11. Given the timing of its first publication in 1919, it may have been written during World War I. Suter was an advocate for the increased role of women in the church and the revision of the prayer book. His ordained ministry began in Massachusetts, and he later served as the dean of the [National] Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul in Washington, DC, from 1944 until 1950. Suter also served as the custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer, from 1942 to 1963. The custodian is a canonically directed appointment made by the General Convention and is responsible for certifying that what is published in the Book of Common Prayer is the text approved by the General Convention. The custodian is also responsible for certifying that translations into languages other than English are faithful to the original.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Psalm 46. Pay particular attention to the context described in the beginning of the psalm and the anticipated response at the end of the psalm. The Hebrew word in verse 46:10 often translated “be still” literally means to sink, or drop, as in “drop your hands, or let go.” It can also mean “stop it” or as one person suggests “shut up.” How might this much more active definition affect our understanding of being still?

I Kings 19:4-18. Pay attention to the context in Elijah's life. Why is he afraid and anxious? What do you think is meant in the phrase "the sheer silence"? Other translations use "a whisper" in place of sheer silence. How does that affect your understanding?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. The Hebrew word for "be still" can be translated "let be" or "sink in." What is it about stillness that is important for a life with God? What are the obstacles in your life and/or personality to 'sinking in' and being quiet?
2. Speak of a time when you heard God in your heart.
3. What is the hope for one who prays this particular collect?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

WEEK 2 “Seek after you” FOR THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH, Book of Common Prayer, p. 257

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Consider how the words and images in this collect reflect the mission of the Church at large. Then, share specifically how you understand or see that broader mission connecting to the stated mission or vision of your worshipping community or congregation. Is there a clear connection? Have you experienced your connection to the mission of the Church ebb and flow in your lifetime?




If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

Prayers for the mission of the Church date back to solemn collects used on Good Friday. The prayer in its original form was only for those in holy orders. In 1549, a new version included all members of the “congregation” which was later changed to “Church”. This prayer embodies a number of scriptural quotations: Acts 17:26; Ephesians 2:17, Isaiah 57:19 and Acts 2:17.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Ephesians 2:17-22. How does this scripture expand or challenge what you see, hear or feel in this collect? How might you answer these questions: Who are “the seekers” in our own communities? In what way, as mentioned in the video, have we been Prodigal children or Emmaus disciples seeking to be found by God? How did you feel during those times?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

Recalling the video questions:

1. What does it mean that the mission of the Church is tied to the sometimes-raw reality of extending peace to those far off and those near?
2. How can we become better adept at extending that peace both in our churches and beyond?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group or using your own words and inspiration, takes turns in offering a prayer for the mission of the Church.*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

WEEK 3 “Keep Watch” FROM COMPLINE, Book of Common Prayer, p. 134

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This collect is found in the service of Compline which originated in the fourth century as the night prayers used by monks in their dormitories. Compline was revived in Anglican communities in the mid-20th century. Its inclusion in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is the first time it has been included in our prayer book.

The prayer itself was composed by Augustine of Hippo [354-430]. Arguably one of the most influential theologians in western Christianity, Augustine also authored one of the first Christian autobiographies entitled “Confessions.” In “Confessions,” Augustine speaks candidly and courageously about his life with God. Today’s collect reflects his understanding of God’s ongoing presence and participation in the various seasons of human life. It may be helpful to take a few minutes to recall the context of the fifth century Roman Empire during which Augustine lived and authored this prayer. It is not too much of a stretch to say that the world was falling apart.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Psalm 139. Like the collect, this is a psalm that acknowledges the presence and participation of God in all the seasons of life. No matter where we are, no matter how far we wander, no matter how deep the darkness, God will not lose us. As you study the psalm, what verse[s] resonate in your life?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. Speak to which phrase in the collect that connects most clearly and closely to the context of your life?
Why?
2. What does it mean to you to “shield the joyous”?
3. What is your theology of angels?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen*

WEEK 4 “Years and scars” ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, Book of Common Prayer, p. 244

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: Mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

Although we give Thomas Cranmer general credit for “writing” the first Book of Common Prayer (1549), he was more of a “compiler” or “editor.” Cranmer pulled together into a “common” source sacramentaries of the earlier Church. This prayer was composed for the dedication of a fifth century basilica and contained in the Gregorian Sacramentary (eighth century) and Sarum Missal.




Did you know:

- Angel is translated from the word meaning “herald” or messenger.”
- At Oxford University, the terms are designated by religious feasts: Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity.
- Michael and Gabriel are the only archangels mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- The Feast of St. Michael was the only such observance recognized by Luther and the Reformers (and Cranmer was married to the daughter of Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s personal secretary).

Many years ago there was with a group doing some late night “kibitzing.” Among them was George Garrett, a contemporary American author and poet. At the time George was the writer in residence at the University of Virginia, a position once held by William Faulkner. He was asked to share one of his poems: “Years and scars later, I finally learned that all angels travel under assumed names.” George Garret is saying that time and wisdom have taught him angels are discovered in the guise of others.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Psalm 103. This psalm is filled with descriptive characteristics of God: forgiveness, healing, redemption, loving kindness, mercy, satisfaction, etc.

Ask each participant to name one quality that is the most compelling in their life. Depending on whether or not this sharing is superficial or intense, consider spending as much time as you can/need sharing/reflecting.

Genesis 28:10-17. This is the wonderful story of Jacob's ladder. Notice that the Lord tells Jacob: "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." The rabbinical tradition has a midrash (a saying or story that provides commentary on a text), "The scripture does not say 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' It says 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Each of us has to discover God for ourselves."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. What memories, emotions, thoughts, etc. does the phrase "years and scars later" conjure up for you?
2. Who have been your angels under assumed names? What message did they bring you?
3. Share an instance in which you have realized, either at the time or later, you have acted as another's angel.
4. What lessons have "years and scars" taught you?
5. What will you do this week to discover God for yourself?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Conclude with traditional version of the collect, Book of Common Prayer, p. 193

O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and men in a wonderful order: Mercifully grant that, as thy holy angels always serve and worship thee in heaven, so by thy appointment they may help and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

WEEK 5 “Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship” FOR THE DIVERSITY OF RACES AND CULTURES, Book of Common Prayer, p. 840

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This prayer is included in the “Prayers and Thanksgivings” section toward the back of the Prayer Book. It is found under the heading, *Thanksgiving for the Social Order* (p. 840). It was drafted by a laywoman, Caroline Rose (Mrs. Lawrence), who also wrote Prayer 22, *For Sound Government* (p. 821-822), and drafted Prayer 8, *For the Mission of the Church* (pp. 816-817), and Prayer 36, *For the Oppressed* (p. 826).

It was first included in the 1979 Prayer Book. What changed/happened during the 50 years between the publication of the 1928 Prayer Book and the 1979 Prayer Book that you think may have prompted the addition of this single prayer of thanksgiving along with so many new prayers about concerns for the social order?

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

I Corinthians 12. Pay particular attention to verses 14, and 26-27. Consider that Paul wrote this letter in response to reports of conflict in the Church at Corinth. How does that affect your understanding of the text?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *Again, these questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. How have you seen God at work through people coming together across different cultures and perspectives to accomplish a mission?
2. To what new places or communities outside your familiar experiences may the Spirit be sending you in order to expand your knowledge of God's love?
3. How might you build into your life a commitment to cross boundaries, listen carefully, and take part in growing in your love for all God's children? With whom could you partner to support you in that commitment?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

WEEK 6 “Practicing Mercy” FOR HUMBLE ACCESS, Book of Common Prayer, p. 337

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This prayer is one that can be traced back to early Eastern liturgies that predate the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549. During medieval times when the priest became the sole actor and recipient of communion, this prayer is one that the priest would say prior to receiving communion. It was not so much a part of the official liturgy as it was the type of private prayer in manuals used by the clergy.

Consequently, this collect is an example of Thomas Cranmer’s determination and purpose to put the entire liturgy into the hands of the people in the language of the people. It is also an example of Cranmer’s creativity of incorporating phrases and concepts from many older sources to create a new prayer. Though its location has moved, this prayer has been included in every Book of Common Prayer since 1549. Over time it became a prayer not only said by the priest, but by the people.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Mathew 8:5-13. What is the significance of this story?

Matthew 9:9-13. “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” What would be the significance of these words to a first century Jew?

Matthew 15:21-28. Outline the differences between Jesus and this woman. What is the significance of this story?

Taken collectively, it seems that for Matthew, the idea of mercy is central to his understanding of Jesus' message and mission. Often considered the most "Jewish" of the Gospels, why might this concept of mercy be important to Matthew? Using these stories as a starting point, what is faith?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. What is your own understanding of mercy?
2. What is the sacrifice that mercy requires of us?
3. Speak of a time that you experienced mercy in your life.
4. Speak of a time that the Holy Eucharist was particularly meaningful to you.

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

WEEK 7 “So fill our imaginations” FOR SELF-DEDICATION, Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

The date of this collect is not known, but its author is William Temple, archbishop of Canterbury (1942-1944), so it is a new addition to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. If there was ever to be sculpted a ‘Mount Rushmore for the Anglican Communion’, William Temple would deserve to be one of the figures included. Space does not allow a detailed biography, but further study of his life would be beneficial. One may believe that this is the only prayer in our prayer book that addresses the importance of imagination.

Temple was known as a theologian and philosopher. How might that background have affected Temple’s composition of this collect?

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Isaiah 6:1-8 or Jeremiah 1:1-19. While today’s collect is not explicitly found in scripture, Biblical stories of God’s call are fueled and filled by the Spirit of God who yearns for total, selfless surrender: “that we may be wholly yours, totally dedicated unto you.” For such an example, take some time with the story of the call of Isaiah or Jeremiah. How are the heart/mind/imagination/will involved in the call of God?

What other scriptural references can you think of that relate to this collect?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. Someone once said that “a sacrifice is giving up what you love for what you love more.” Speak of a time when your dedication to God meant making a sacrifice of something you loved.
2. What role, if any, do you believe that one’s imagination has in a life of faith?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

WEEK 8 “Do the work you give us” FOR VOCATION IN DAILY WORK, Book of Common Prayer, p. 261

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

The collect is an adaptation from the original “For Every Man in his Work” prayer written by Bishop Frederick Dan Huntington found in the 1928 Prayer Book. In the modified version, “callings” was replaced by “occupations” and “mammon” [an Aramaic word which means wealth or riches] by “self alone.”

Define and compare callings versus occupations and mammon versus self alone. Discuss the potential change in the meaning of the prayer that might have been affected by the word replacements.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Matthew 6:24. Money. We spend hours daily working to earn money. We live in a culture that influences us to keep up on the latest gadgets and trends...possessions. Conversely, money affords us financial security and offers us the opportunity to help those in need. This scripture tells us that we cannot serve God and wealth. Examine what this means for you.

1 Corinthians 10:31. We all desire to have fulfillment in our daily lives, whether that be in volunteer ministry work or in salaried careers. Sometimes we start to feel the weight of unhappiness because we lose perspective of “why” we do the work we are given to do. Examine if your work is being done to the “glory to God.”

FINAL THOUGHTS *These questions are suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. How do you bring God into your work space?
2. What does it look like to “love your neighbor” when your neighbor is a colleague, customer, employer, etc. especially in the midst of conflict?
3. How might our daily work reflect our higher calling to be Jesus in the world?
4. Examine what challenges in the workplace or community draw you away from loving service.

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

WEEK 9 “Guide the people” FOR AN ELECTION, Book of Common Prayer, p. 822

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Almighty God, to whom we must account for all our powers and privileges: Guide the people of the United States (or of this community) in the election of officials and representatives; that, by faithful administration and wise laws, the rights of all may be protected and our nation be enabled to fulfill your purposes; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

Several years ago I was asked to pray at a luncheon featuring former secretary of state, James Baker, as the speaker. When I sat down, Secretary Baker said, “Father, that was the best...and shortest...of any prayer I have ever heard.” I replied that it was from the Prayer Book and that he might find similar ones beginning on page 814.

There are some wonderful prayers in our tradition that we seldom realize are even there. Have your group ‘thumb through’ that section and have them identify prayers of particular meaning to each.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

I Samuel 8. In many ways, Samuel’s prophetic life is largely ignored in the Hebrew Scriptures. He is a figure of immense importance, however, and his mother’s “song” prefigured the *Magnificat*. If I were rewriting the Biblical story of the Jews, I would begin with this text. There is no turning back for the Jews after this.

Why was Samuel opposed to the Israelites having a king “just as do the other peoples of the earth”?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

To think about:

It is common in most parishes to pray by name for the president of the United States as well as other elected officials. Many years ago I had a friend, an Episcopal priest, who would not pray for then Alabama governor, George Wallace. When I questioned the appropriateness of his refusal, he readily admitted to his shortcomings. He made no attempt to defend himself. Nevertheless, he would not so pray.

For discussion:

1. What would have been your response to your priest for such a refusal?
2. Have there been those in/running for public service for whom you could not pray?
3. Should clergy be allowed to express their political views and in what context?
4. Most public office holders, particularly in our part of the world, openly practice their faith. To what degree should public officials' civic duties reflect personal religious values?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Almighty God, to whom we must account for all our powers and privileges: Guide the people of the United States (or of this community) in the election of officials and representatives; that, by faithful administration and wise laws, the rights of all may be protected and our nation be enabled to fulfill your purposes; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPT:

In his "Letters and Papers from Prison," Bonhoeffer says the following: "...the world is controlled by forces against which reason is powerless."

And...

"We have spent too much time thinking, supposing that if we weigh every possibility in advance everything will somehow happen automatically. We have learnt a bit too late in the day that action springs not from thought, but from responsibility."

Homework:

It is the responsibility of every citizen to vote your conscience. When you go to the polls, pray beforehand...in fact, take the Prayer for an Election with you.

AND VOTE!

WEEK 10 “Unending joy” FOR THE DEPARTED, Book of Common Prayer, p. 253

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Eternal Lord God, you hold all souls in life: Give to your whole Church in paradise and on earth your light and your peace; and grant that we, following the good examples of those who have served you here and are now at rest, may at the last enter with them into your unending joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

Prayer for the dead is well documented within early Christianity, both among prominent Church fathers and the Christian community in general. An important element in the Christian liturgies both East and West consisted of the diptychs, or lists of names of living and dead commemorated at the Eucharist.

According to the Catechism in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, "We pray for (the dead), because we still hold them in our love, and because we trust that in God's presence those who have chosen to serve him will grow in his love, until they see him as he is."

Consider how the words reflect faith and hope in this life and into eternity. How do the words connect with your sense of being inspired by those who have lived well and been good examples of a service-oriented life?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-14; John 14: 1-2; Romans 14:8; and Psalm 48:14. Discuss the context of the scripture and how it relates to the collect. In light of the promises read in the scripture passages, how are you enabled or inspired to move through this life more faithfully? How does it call upon your imagination about your own walk of faith and legacy?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. What is the hope for one who prays this particular collect?
2. Recalling the collect, the video question(s) and scriptural passages: who are the saints now at rest who have stretched your heart, helped you see light or found a glimpse of the promise of unending joy?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Eternal Lord God, you hold all souls in life: Give to your whole Church in paradise and on earth your light and your peace; and grant that we, following the good examples of those who have served you here and are now at rest, may at the last enter with them into your unending joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

WEEK 11 “Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit” FOR THE NEWLY BAPTIZED, Book of Common Prayer, p. 308

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon *these* your *servants* the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace. Sustain *them*, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give *them* an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*




Rites of initiation are central to the life of all communities and cultures. In Judaism, baptism was the rite of initiation for converts. The baptismal liturgy in our current 1979 Prayer Book recovers the practices of the early Church, who followed the basic form of the Jewish rite in order to signify a new beginning and incorporation in a new community.

The very first thing that happens in the life of a newly baptized person, whether they are 4 weeks or 40 years old, is that the celebrant leads the gathered community to pray this prayer for them. The Prayer Book defines prayer as “responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” This prayer is the community of faith’s essential and foundational response to God for the life of the person who belongs to God’s Beloved Community: gratitude and the request for God’s power to equip them for this new life.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

If you are baptized, when and where did that happen? If you are not baptized, when and where have you experienced a rite of passage that marked a new beginning and connection with others? Who celebrated that occasion with you?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Isaiah 11. This is a description of God's Kingdom. Verse 2 is traditionally associated with a prayer that became part of the post-baptismal rites hundreds of years ago; a prayer for the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Compare and contrast the gifts of God's Spirit as described by the prophet Isaiah and those that our current post-baptismal prayer describes as necessary to sustain people in their new life.

Acts 1:1-8. The apostles experience Jesus – alive and present with them – and now understand themselves as missionaries, or messengers being sent out. Jesus acknowledges that they are going to have to live with some uncertainty about the particulars of what the future holds. Pay particular attention to verse 8; they can take comfort and confidence in God's promise, Jesus assures them, they *will* have the power of the Holy Spirit to do this. How do the spiritual gifts described in this prayer enable people to be loving and powerful?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. Consider what people need most not just to survive, but to thrive in life. How does this prayer speak to those needs in your life and witness in others' lives?
2. Celebrate the power you've been given. How can you bless others by practicing this prayer in your daily life? Be specific about the people or situations in which your actions could join with the good news that God is sharing this week.

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon *these* your *servants* the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace. Sustain *them*, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give *them* an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*

WEEK 12 “Thank you” THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING, Book of Common Prayer, p. 101

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*




The General Thanksgiving is attributed to Edward Reynolds (1599-1676), bishop of Norwich, and was possibly inspired by a private prayer of Queen Elizabeth issued in 1596. Some believe that this prayer – or a fuller form from which it was excerpted – was used as a Eucharistic prayer during the period when the Book of Common Prayer was banned from use.

Prior to the 1604 revision of the Prayer Book, Puritans complained that there were not enough prayers of thanksgiving in the Prayer Book. Consequently, this prayer was added to the Prayer Book in 1662 under the heading, “A General Thanksgiving.” The first American Prayer Book (1789) required use of this prayer at every Daily Office. In 1892, its use became optional, except on Sundays when the Eucharist did not follow immediately. An example of the goal of more participation by the people, the current Prayer Book directs it to be said by officiant and people.

Outline the thanksgivings in this prayer. What would you have included that is not in it?

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
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	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Luke 17:11-19. What is it about the action of the one leper who returns that so deeply affects Jesus? Some have argued that this is the only story in the Gospel of someone expressing gratitude to Jesus. What is the importance of gratitude?

What other scriptural references can you think of that relate to this collect?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

This is the last week of this series on praying the prayers in the BCP. Take some time to reflect over the course of these collects and consider writing your own.

1. How would you address God?
2. What do you most seek in your life? For what do you most yearn in the world?
3. What situation or condition would you address?
4. For what are you most thankful and would like to praise God?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. *Amen.*



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