

Prayers offered in the House of Deputies, 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church,
Anaheim, California
July 8 – 17, 2009
The Rev. Dr. Francis H. Wade, Chaplain

Note: The first prayer in each section was used at the beginning of the legislative day after a meditation. At various points in the work of convention, the presiding officer called on the chaplain for special prayers. These are noted. The final prayer was offered at the end of each legislative day as a summary and offering of the work that had been done. Prayers from various sources are noted. Those without notation were written by the chaplain.

Day 1

Jesus the carpenter, pry open our minds, hearts and spirits that we may be able to see the world, ourselves and one another in new ways. Especially on this day, help us to lay strong foundations for our work as a house of this convention that we may be able to build actions, attitudes and understandings worthy of your name. Amen

There was morning, there was evening, the first day; the day the foundations were laid for creation and for this convention. Pieces have come together, gaps have appeared, lessons have been learned, new language has been exercised, rituals honored, gifts of trust, hope, forgiveness and understanding have been exchanged. The Spirit has moved. It is the first day. It is church. It is good. Amen

Day 2

Vigilant God, whose ears are always open to your people's cry, hear the plea of those who are...in distress; attend to those whose clamor is for justice and whose lament seeks comfort and reconciliation. May your spirit shape us into a people of long listening and patient understanding toward one another, generous in heart, leavened by humor, truthful in speech and kindly in intent; and grant us a share of the mind which was in Christ our Savior. Amen.

Deputy Jennifer Phillips, Diocese of Rhode Island

O Lord, how long it takes to learn to be efficient, to get our machines to work, to use our skills in public narrative. We have dared to walk the road to Emmaus – talking, wondering. You have joined us. Let our hearts burn with your fire and use that fire to light the way to your truth. Amen.

Day 3

Blessed and holy God, we would be wise with important things, gentle with fragile things, robust with generous things. But how do we listen when people speak of hard things, heavy things and hopeful things? How do we fashion the structure of the stage on which we will act our part in your drama when we do not know the parts we will play? How can the compassion of the many respond appropriately to the passion of a few? How can we stretch our primitive sense of ubuntu to lands and people foreign to many of us. How, but by your grace. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.

Day 4

In the true faith may we remain, in Jesus may we find hope, against exploitation of the poor may we help, against our faults may we fight, our bad habits abandon, the name of our neighbor may we defend, in the work of mercy may we advance, those in misery may we help, every danger of sin may we avoid, in holy charity may we grow strong, in the well of grace in confession may we wash, may we deserve the help of the saints and the friendship of Jesus win. Amen

Adapted from Celtic Night Prayers

Moving Spirit, we are taught that love without truth is sentimentality and truth without love is brutality, so you have set us at the task of bringing truth and love together to make a place where all people will come to seek one another and you. The work is hard, but it is your work and we undertake it with you for we cannot do it alone. Spirit move among us. Amen

Prayer before voting on D025 affirming the openness of ministry discernment to all of the baptized.

O God our father by whose mercy and might the world turns safely into darkness and returns again to light; we give into thy hands our unfinished tasks, our unsolved problems and our unfulfilled hopes, knowing that only that which thou didst bless will prosper. To thy great love and protection we commit each other and all those we love, knowing thou art our sure defender, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Church of South India

Day 5

Lord God, Creator of all things and all peoples, we walk now in circle of love and power. Let us be like your light, like a great tree. Mighty in the roots, mighty in the top, that reaches the sky where the leaves catch the light and sing with the wind the song of the circle. Let our lives be like the rainbows whose colors teach us unity. Let us, Almighty God, follow the great circle, the roundness of your power and be as one through your son Jesus Christ. And in the power of the Spirit we pray.

Niobrara Deanery, Diocese of South Dakota

Let us wait for the Spirit. Let us listen for the lead we are being given. It is hard for large bodies to do delicate things: to apply yes and no votes to complex issues; to follow threads of truth across the plaid of many facts; to reach across the gaps of language and culture to respond to the deep realities of our sisters and brothers; to do what is best when we are not sure what is right. So bless us with compassion that is informed, love that is wise, justice that is generous and processes that are empowered that we might provide tinder for the Spirit's sparks so that the fire of the Gospel spreads throughout the Diocese of Ecuador Central. Amen

Prayer before the debate on the Episcopal election in Ecuador Central

Blessed Lord, we hold up to you the work of this day. In our legislative way we have tried to love. We have listened to our youth and we have learned. We respected as best we could the conflicting expectations in Ecuador. We caused pain and gave joy in the hope that healing will continue. We tried to protect the vulnerable from abuse, the church from misguided clergy and the clergy from misguided concern. We tried to be instruments of peace and stewards of the environment. We urged care for widows and survivors, and pondered the embrace of our discernments for ministry. In the belief that even imperfect love is acceptable to you, we lay this days work upon your altar.

Day 6

Almighty God, you have given us responsibility for the leadership of the Church for a season. Grant us patience, courage and wisdom to discern your will amidst the many competing claims and conflicts of this present time. Give us an appreciative memory for all who have gone before, and a strong clear vision of the Church of the future. Let us exercise our stewardship with energy and enthusiasm, so that, when the time comes, we may joyfully relinquish our tasks to those who come after. We ask this in the name of our redeemer, Jesus Christ, who calls us into fellowship and sends the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us, generation after generation, that we may do all to your greater glory.

Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis, Women's Uncommon Prayers

Generous God, you have blessed us with the gift of wonder. We have wondered and even dared to explore the manner in which we hold up role models in our church; the manner in which open up our discernment processes; the manner in which we maintain financial candor; the manner in which we receive the contributions of our elders. We ask you to turn our wonder into service and our boldness into love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Day 7

God whose desire for us will not be thwarted when we lock ourselves away in fear:

your Christ comes to us through the walls we build, filling us with peace and courage;

when we hide ourselves in the abyss, even there your right hand holds us fast;

and when we wander in the greyfields of our sin, you call us back

and your untiring love harrows hell to save us!

Give us grace, that even lying in the graves of our own devising,

we may stretch out our hands to be grasped by the strong arm of our Savior, Jesus Christ,

and be raised with him by the power of the Holy Spirit into eternal union with you, who live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Deputy Jennifer Philips, Diocese of Rhode Island

O God, in you all things are reconciled and no estrangement is found: Give us hope, even when we can see no way beyond the present conflict. You are the One who acts with power when human action fails. Forgive and heal our failure to find the way by ourselves, our human inability to even imagine forgiveness, our human preference for victory over reconciliation, and our perverse suspicion that

even to see another point of view besides our own is to capitulate and lose face. Help us to seek our worth in your love for us, and not in any imagined superiority of one over another. You, O God, who bring good even from great evil, are the one God for all people, and so we pray to you in hope. Amen

Rev. Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, Women's Uncommon Prayers

Day 8

Invisible, almighty and eternal God, whose energy and order guides the atomic particles and the planets in their dance: deepen in us appreciation for our cosmos, renew our joy in your goodness, move us to respect and wonder at the mystery of your work and grant us to be prudent in conserving, temperate in using, brave in self-restraining, generous in sharing, and just in honoring every creature of yours in its own right and for your sake, that in all things we may honor you and give you praise. Amen.

Deputy Jennifer Phillips, Diocese of Rhode Island

Blessed God, you call us to care for our neighbors and we have tried to do so with the instruments we have at hand to provide health care and pensions, to respond to workers and victims. And we have begun to search for faces and ministries behind a thicket of budget figures. Let us not turn away from these persons when we have other instruments of care at our disposal. Help us to use the money we control, the time we give and the prayers we offer to continue to respond to those you hold before us. Amen

May God bless all we have accomplished thus far. May God inspire us to move ahead swiftly and compassionately to embrace and act upon the urgent cries of the world's poor and oppressed and of this fragile earth. Indeed may we be moved to love our neighbors as ourselves in the short time we have left. Amen

Deputy Bill Exner, Diocese of New Hampshire and Deputy Sarah Lawton of California

Day 9

Life giving Spirit, you have made us part of a story worth telling. We thank you for the wonder of all do in us, through us and among us. We thank you for the joy and purpose, the struggle and value, the richness and power of living this particular chapter. Grant us pause, reflection and perception to recognize what you are doing in our lives. Grant us language, courage and opportunity so that the story you are telling with our lives might touch both us and others. In the name of Jesus the story teller we pray. Amen

It has been a long hard day, Lord, in which we have presumed to exercise our right to speak to government and to the Church. And we have looked into the mirror of the budget where our losses have faces we can see all too clearly; so clearly that they can obscure our awareness of what we are choosing to do. Open our hearts to those we hurt and open our eyes to those we help that we might serve you in both mercy and truth. Amen.

Day 10

A prayer of reflection and anticipation

Jesus, we thank you that as we follow your path there are opportunities to pause at high places where the clouds have cleared and we can see the road behind and before.

Looking back there are serious conflicts in which we see incredible acts of courage and integrity in the routine course of ministry miracles. We are thankful. We see people in our midst who have borne great responsibility and shown great love in those conflicts. We are grateful.

There is pain behind us. Relationships, some of them important friendships, have been broken and lost. They grieve us yet.

Looking forward we can see more courage and integrity, although from here we cannot see faces. We would strengthen them.

There are people with great responsibility, some of whom we have named by election and many who will be called to love that is sometimes harsh but always beautiful. We encourage them.

And there is more pain and healing, more loss and reconciliation. We are hopeful.

We look back and we see you.

We look ahead and we see you.

And in all things we thank you.

Amen.

We understand how to vote by now. Help us to remember that votes are offerings placed not just before this House and the Church but also upon Your altar. Help us to know that we are crafting offerings to be brought before you. Remind us that some of the darkest moments in our history have been filled with confidence. Help us to be cautious with our confidence in regard to this matter. Let us wonder what voting the opposite of our convictions would mean. Help us to know that the conclusion of debate is not the conclusion of relationship. Prepare us for community. Prepare us for faithfulness. Amen.

Prayer before the vote on C056 regarding the blessing of same sex relationships

Lord it is night. The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God. It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done. What has not been done has not been done. Let it be. The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and our own lives rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us and all who have no peace. The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities. In your name we pray. Amen.

New Zealand Book of Common Prayer

Life is short and we do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us; so be swift to love and make haste to be kind.

Henri Amiel (1821 – 1881)