

Prayer Matters

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Under the Banner of *Prayer is Our Thing*, Anglicans from across Canada gathered in June of this year at Lavrock Camp and Conference Centre, a facility near St. John's that is maintained by the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador. The event was a consultation organized by the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (AFP). Diocesan Prayer Representatives (DR's) from across Canada and the AFP Executive gathered to share their ministry of encouraging people to pray and to look to the future. I attended as the AFP Representative for Ottawa Diocese.

I was inspired by what God is doing through others, and the possibilities of what can be done in our Diocese to encourage people to pray in their daily lives, not just in worship services. The AFP Executive has pledged to concentrate on working to make AFP relevant in today's fast changing, electronically connected, and busy world. Priority is being given to: providing support to Diocesan Representatives; upgrading the ways we communicate to people across the country; and revising the financial structure to promote participation in the work of AFP.

Each day of the gathering started with a Gospel Based Discipleship (GBD) exercise which offered the thirty plus participants an opportunity to reflect and to share with each other what the Lord was saying to each of us and calling us to do as a result of reading a passage of scripture. GBD is a form of bible based reflection based on the practice of many of our indigenous people. Music played a crucial role during the consultation, not only in our times of praise but also as a our primary form of prayer. We were reminded that the one who sings, prays twice. Under the outstanding leadership of the AFP National Director, Archdeacon Paul Feheley, we were encouraged to concentrate on the words and tunes of the songs and hymns. Both the tune and the words became a prayer.

The challenge for me, and others who would help, is to take the excitement, ideas and suggestions that emerged at the gathering and apply them to our Diocese. It seems to me that the best basis for furthering the work of encouraging prayer throughout our Diocese is to work with both clergy and lay people at the parish level to provide leadership, education and resources that suit local needs. One size does not fit all. To that end I will be doing my best to contact parishes and seek out those who will help in the vital ministry of inspiring people to pray to God through Jesus Christ, in the ways that work best for them.

We were doubly blessed in Newfoundland by the attendance of two Indigenous members of AFP, one from the Arctic and the other from Mishamikweesh, the new Anglican Diocese in northern Ontario. Our sister from Mishamiskweesh revealed a depth of compassion that can only be said to reflect the compassion of Jesus as she wept for her unknown sister who had been brutally murdered in another community, and then moved us to pray with her. There was a profound sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit as our agenda was superseded by this unplanned call to prayer.

Participants also enjoyed traditional Newfoundland hospitality. Our Newfoundland hosts had arranged an afternoon bus tour of the local sights of St. John's which in spite of the wind and cold was fun and interesting. Our tour was enhanced by the surprising gift of song that our bus driver offered to us on several occasions. He began our tour with a traditional Newfoundland song and ended it by inviting us to join him as he sang "Breathe on Me Breath of God."

I encourage anybody who believes that *Prayer Matters* to feel free to contact me and/or look at www.anglicanprayer.org, which we hope will be upgraded and improved in the days ahead.