

Peace

GA 2021 Prayer Initiative
Now what?

As friends, members, adherents, elders and ministers in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, we have spent time fervently praying for the 146th General Assembly, that was held online June 6-9, 2021. We prayed for the commissioners, the moderator, the clerks, the General Assembly Office and all of those who have had a role of some influence on the gathering. We prayed for God's Holy Hands to prepare us for something new. And we continue to submit ourselves to something that is entirely in God's Holy Will, something that conforms to the authentic and timeless reading of scripture.

This prayer initiative was organized by The Renewal Fellowship within The Presbyterian Church in Canada in co-operation with Presbyterians Standing for Apostolic Love and Truth (PSALT) and others of like mind. And we could not have fulfilled the need for prayer without each of you.

For all the time spent on knees, in prayer closets, listening, petitioning and interceding, we thank every one of you.

But now what? What do we do now? How do we move forward, honouring Jesus while working through how we feel about the outcome?

Maybe, just for a moment, we sit and wait. Maybe we enter into a time of reflection, a time of listening, a time of truthful consideration of our own thoughts and responses.

The word of the Lord:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. — John 14:27 (NIV)

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. — Luke 10:38-39 (NIV)

*Be still, and know that I am God
— Ps 46:10a*

Let us begin with a timeless ancient prayer:

(Liturgy of St. James as published in *Prayers of the Early Church*, Published 1953, Online under the Gutenberg licence)

O God, the Father of our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose name is great, whose nature is blissful, whose goodness is inexhaustible, God and Ruler of all things, who art blessed forever; before whom stand thousands and thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, the hosts of holy angels and archangels; sanctify, O Lord, our souls and bodies and spirits, search our consciences, and cast out of us every evil thought, every base desire, all envy and pride, all wrath and anger, and all that is contrary to Thy holy will. And grant us, O Lord, Lover of men, with a pure heart and contrite soul, to call upon Thee, our holy God and Father who art in heaven. Amen.

Be Still

How often do we simply sit. Still. Quiet. Do we know how to settle our minds and be present to Jesus? Our hearts and our heads are full of words and hurts and conversations - those had, those imagined, some rewritten to what we *wish* we had said or heard. Sometimes these conversations and memories hurt. They ache something within us. Perhaps they carry anger, disappointment, frustration, betrayal.

How do you FEEL about what happened at General Assembly? Have you taken time to sit with that emotion? Not dwell in or become that emotion but acknowledge it is there? God gave us this incredible broad range of emotions and the ability to feel them. Take a moment. What are you feeling about the outcome of GA? Give it its proper name. Having labeled it and felt it, can you now give it to Jesus?

Jesus, I release to you my feelings of [each emotion that rises in your spirit]. Thank you for giving me the heart to feel each of these emotions. Jesus I thank you for moments of joy, of peace and of love. Thank you for giving me a heart that feels each of these emotions too.

Having released these feelings, is there someone you need to forgive? Perhaps a word heard or a disagreement over process, a difference of opinion or even a look or facial expression observed. Sometimes we carry these things as personal slights that become wounds and get between us and Jesus.

Jesus, will you show me if there is anyone I need to forgive?

Forgiveness is a choice. It does not absolve anyone of the activity done or the word spoken but choosing to forgive releases us from the burden of carrying the weight. It releases to Jesus the job of worrying about what has happened and frees up our hearts to meet with Him and to love those around us.

With the list of names or organizations Jesus has raised for you, the following prayer can help. Praying this out loud, separately for each hurt being carried:

Lord Jesus, I choose to forgive [name the person, organization, group] for [what they did or failed to do] because it made me feel [share the feelings]

When you have exhausted the list, conclude this time with the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, I choose not to hold on to my resentment. I relinquish my right to seek revenge and ask You to heal my damaged emotions. Thank You for seeing me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I now ask You to bless those who have hurt me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

The question remains: Now what? Perhaps, we keep it simple and return to another timeless prayer:

O Sovereign and Almighty Lord, bless all Thy people and all Thy flock. Give peace, Thy help, Thy love unto us, Thy servants the sheep of Thy fold, that we may be united in the bond of peace and love, one body and one spirit, in one hope of our calling, in Thy Divine and boundless love; for the sake of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep. Amen.

(Liturgy of St. Mark as published in *Prayers of the Early Church*, Published 1953, Online under the Gutenberg licence)