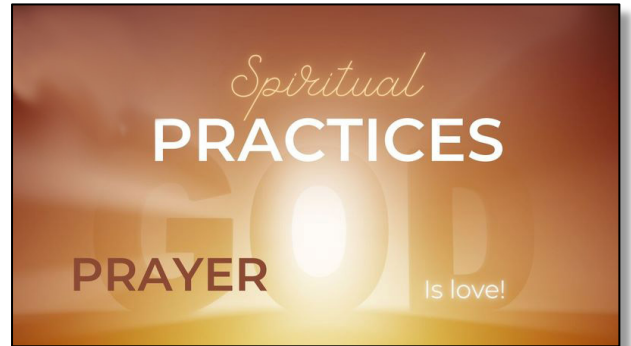


Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer

## Tools for Prayer and Spiritual Practices

*Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP 236)*

I hope you have enjoyed and benefitted from our “walk” or “journey” through the major sections of The Book of Common Prayer. It was sort of a walk through a flower garden. Each section has been like a “flower” that we have been able to stop and gaze at. Sometimes, perhaps, one or more flowers has been more interesting or more appealing to you than others. But that is why there are so many varieties of flowers—not every flower appeals to everyone in the same way.



Perhaps you have been encouraged to spend more time with the BCP or scripture, or even prayer. I hope so. Most of us would like to have a fuller, deeper life of faith. But often we don’t know where to start. Developing spiritual practices – prayers, reading, meditation, group study—is a bit like exercise. Most agree that exercise is good, and that some is better than none. And, like exercise, sometimes we just get stuck where we are. The same is true with spiritual practices. At some point it’s time to take a step and do something. It is perfectly fine to try several practices out to see what works best.

The BCP can help. In addition to its collection of prayers and liturgical rites for use throughout the church year, the BCP includes several tools to help us in our study of scripture and our understanding of the Christian faith within the Anglican tradition. Some of these tools may help you live your faith more richly and to grow in your relationship with Christ.

Here are some of the tools found in The Book of Common Prayer:

1. The Lectionary. Daily prayer is important for every Christian. The readings that are used in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist are found at pp. 887-931. It is always helpful to read them before going to the worship service. They are also included in the email we receive from Good Shepherd on Sunday morning. A separate Daily Office Lectionary is also provided for use with Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, found at pp. 933-1001.
2. Prayers and Thanksgivings. This section of the BCP is found on pp. 810-841. These prayers and thanksgivings are useful for everyday use. They are suitable not only for congregations, but for families and individuals as well. Easy-to-remember meal graces are found on p. 835. Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families are found on pp. 136-140.
3. The Daily Office. The Daily Office is the richest form of daily prayer. As discussed in week 6, the Daily Office is rooted in ancient tradition, and is focused primarily on Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. The Daily Office, for both Rites I and II, is found on pp. 37-146.
4. An Outline of the Faith, or Catechism, found on pp. 845-862, is not only a source of learning about the Episcopal faith and Church. It can also be a source of prayer by asking for understanding of these articles of faith and how they apply to our lives.

Besides using the Lectionary as a guide for scripture reading and study, and if you are just getting started, an easy way is to use an app or website such as the *Forward Day by Day* app or picking up a *Forward Day by Day* booklet at church. Another convenient resource is the Daily Prayer website ([prayer.forwardmovement.org](http://prayer.forwardmovement.org)).

A reminder, Good Shepherd and Deacon Rich Wilson live streams Morning Prayer each Wednesday morning at 9:15. The link is on the Good Shepherd website. Morning Prayer is offered in person each Thursday morning at church at 9:00. The Morning Prayer service on Thursdays sometimes includes the Eucharist.

And one more important note: these are called spiritual “practices” for a reason. We are always practicing. We are always finding new ways to communicate with God.

That completes our walk or journey through the major sections of The Book of Common Prayer. I hope you enjoyed our time together and that your faith has been challenged at times and strengthened at times. Thank you for spending time with me. Enjoy the rest of your summer. See you in the fall.

In Christ, Deacon John

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If you find these articles to be of value to you, please let me know. If you did not find them to be of value, or you have suggestions to make future articles more interesting or helpful to you, please let me know that as well. Thank you.

A special thank you to Nancy Fees for her very capable assistance in publishing these articles and in the illustrations that bring color and life to the printed word. And again, recognition of the below three texts from which I drew much content and ideas for these articles.

“Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer” by Vicki K. Black, Morehouse Publishing, 2005

“Walk in Love, Episcopal Beliefs & Practices” by Scott Gunn & Melody Wilson Shobe, Forward Movement, 2018

“Praying Shapes Believing, A Theological Commentary of the Book of Common Prayer” by Leonel L. Mitchell (updated by Ruth A. Meyers), Seabury Books, 2016