

Names in the Prayers: a First Sunday Explanation

At each Eucharist we use one of the forms of the Prayers of the People found in the Book of Common Prayer. Each of these includes key elements listed in the instructions for the Eucharist: “the Universal Church, its members, and its mission, the Nation and all in authority, the welfare of the world, the concerns of the local community, those who suffer and those in any trouble, the departed”

As part of our prayer for the Church, we join Anglican churches throughout the world in praying for our spiritual head, the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the leader of our own branch (in our case Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori), and for the Bishop of our own Diocese. There is an Anglican Cycle of Prayer which includes prayers for all dioceses in the world during the course of a year. We therefore include the diocese of the week and their bishop or archbishop. Similarly our diocesan cycle of prayer gives us parishes and institutions of Western Oregon and their rectors, etc., to pray for each week. In this way, our prayers are joined with all of our fellow Anglicans and Episcopalians, lifting one another up in prayer – and know that we are lifted up regularly by other Episcopalians in Oregon and Anglicans around the world.

In praying for those in authority we include our President and Governor. In praying for the welfare of the world we may mention specific countries and areas that are experiencing war, natural disaster, or other difficulties.

Concerns of the local community typically include prayers for members or relatives who are deployed abroad in the armed forces, those who are traveling and have requested prayers, and those who are expecting the birth of a child. Related to this category are ‘those who suffer and those in any trouble.’ Here we include names of parishioners, relatives, and friends who are in need of healing. Unless otherwise specified, these are kept on our list for a month. Updates are needed to keep people on longer. There are two other categories here: those with chronic illness and those in need of guidance and support. People typically remain much longer on these lists. Because they are on so long, there is a rotation of names read aloud at worship. All the names appear in the bulletin and email each week, but one third are read aloud in public worship. Updates of both lists are requested periodically, so that we know who continues to need prayer.

Parishioners and close relatives who die are typically included for a month. It is also possible to request that a deceased relative be remembered on a special anniversary (usually when flowers are offered in memory.)

In addition to these, it is appropriate to include specific thanksgivings of the gathered community. In this section we name all parishioners who have birthdays or anniversaries and new births, as well as occasionally other notable occasions of gratitude.

There are prayer cards in the pews on which requests for either private or public prayer can be made. It is also possible to call the church office to request that someone be put on the prayer list or to give an update. Our shared prayers are an essential part of our life as a Christian community. It is our great privilege to lift one another up in prayer into the light of God’s love.