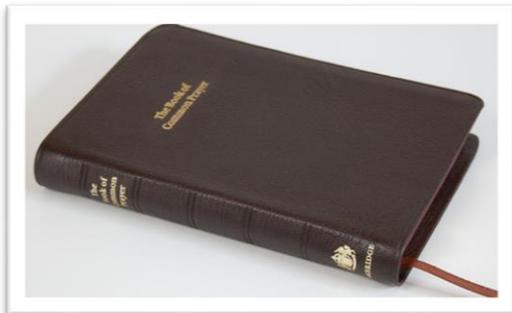
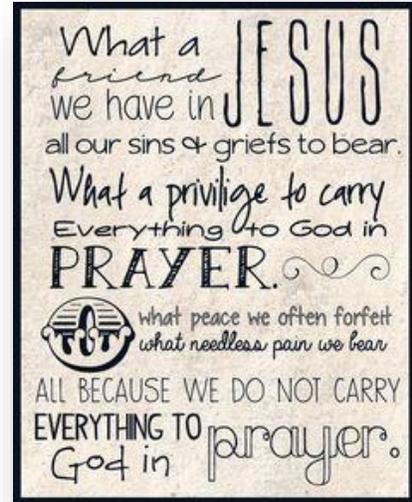


What a Friend We Have In Jesus

The Rev'd. Dr. John Roddam | www.Pleroma.ca

Growing up in a small town parish in this diocese in the 1950's and 1960's, the staple for worship was the blue 1938 hymnal. I still have my mother's copy. She sang in the choir for over 60 years! For some reason, the section most widely used was at the end of the book – Evangelistic Missions. Of course the congregation's favourite was #779 – yes, you guessed it! - "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" I learned the words by rote very young as a child. However, this song confused and disturbed me... How could we sing about someone as a friend who died 2000 years ago? I was a good deist and believed in God but I hadn't encountered the life-changing 2nd person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ. That didn't come until my early 20's, creating a paradigm shift of huge proportions.

Like many of my peers I came to Faith outside the Anglican Church and returned – a convinced Christian and an Anglican! I described myself one of those cradle Anglicans who finally got out of the cradle and owned my faith. I was an Anglican by birth . . . and by conviction! With a fresh understanding of the implications of the Resurrection of Christ – He is alive! – I discovered that one could, in fact, develop a friendship with the Saviour. This personal component hasn't been prominent in NS Anglican culture but in my travels elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, this is the fire that enlivens individuals and parishes. I have had the privilege of travelling throughout the Anglican World and this personal component is what fuels life in Anglo-Catholic Singaporean and Myanmar Dioceses, Underground and 3-Self Churches in China, and dynamic dioceses in Africa. Frankly, I believe the spiritual dynamic of knowing Jesus in a personal way is one of the key components that will stop the free fall of losing members in our Canadian Anglican parishes... but I digress!



One of the joys I've had from childhood is exploring the riches of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. This began as a diversion during boring sermons in my teens but has grown to a deep appreciation of the BCP. There are many elements of the text that are rarely (or never!) used today. The first Exhortation (Pp. 88-89) at the end of the Service of Holy Communion calls people to prepare for "proper reception" of Holy Communion. This Exhortation speaks of having a "lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour."

Personal faith in Christ is an important component in the reception of Holy Communion. (cf. Article XXIX Pp. 710)

In university, a friend asked me, "What's the big deal about being a Christian?" I responded, "I'm not alone anymore!" Jesus words, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13: 5) have become a great comfort in the ups and downs of life.

The Advent Season (Advent meaning 'coming') speaks of The Coming One – Jesus. The Christmas Season heralds Emmanuel – "God with us!" I have encouraged lifelong Anglicans to pray to the Lord for the grace to walk through the Advent and Christmas seasons as if they've never heard the story or sang the carols before. May the Lord grace YOU with a fresh revelation of His love with an ever-deepening and abiding friendship with your Savior Jesus Christ!