

Revealed in Prayer

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church

May 18, 2025

A farmer lived alone in the Irish countryside with a pet dog he loved dearly. One day, the dog died, and the farmer went to the parish priest to inquire if a mass could be said for his dad pet. Father Patrick told the farmer, "No, we can't have services for an animal in the church, but I'll tell you what. There's a new denomination down the road, and no telling what they believe in, but maybe they'll do something for the animal." The farmer said, "Thanks, I'll go right away. By the way, do you think \$50,000 is enough to donate for such a service?" Father Patrick replied, "Why didn't you tell me the dog was Catholic?"

A capital campaign is not just a fundraising event; it's a spiritual journey of faith, trust, and obedience. Prayer is the cornerstone of this journey, connecting our efforts to God's will and power. As we seek to fulfill God's vision for our church, let us deepen our prayer lives, recognizing that our financial gifts are expressions of our faith and a sacred act of worship. Two weeks ago, Fr. Roman had us revisit our mission and vision, and last week we saw how our mission and vision are grounded in our gratitude for all the blessings that God has given us, both individually and as a church.

Today, we will take a look at prayer as a Foundation for Faith and Stewardship

Capital campaigns are not just about raising money; they are about cultivating a sense of shared purpose and spiritual growth within the church. Prayer is the bridge that our desire to build God's kingdom with the tangible work of a capital campaign. It's a time of spiritual renewal, where we acknowledge our dependence on God and seek His guidance in every aspect of the campaign. I hope you have a copy of *Innamoramento: 35 Days to Fall in Love with Jesus All Over Again*, and that you are reading, reflecting, and praying each day for God's guidance and blessings as we journey together to grow His Kingdom here at St. Dunstan's.

The most under-utilized power on earth is not ethanol or solar power or even nuclear power. The most under-utilized power on earth is the power of God channeled through **prayer**. Surveys have revealed that 71 percent of Americans believe that God definitely answers **prayer** and another 15 percent believe that God probably does. That means that 86 percent of Americans believe that **prayer** is effective. Nevertheless, just a small percentage of Americans have a specific time set aside each day for **prayer**. Why is that? It's a testimony to the devil's skills as a salesman. The devil's constant aim is to keep Christians from praying. So, he reminds us of some past **prayer** that seems to have gone unanswered. Then he tells us that we are too busy to pray, and that **prayer** should be saved for emergency situations.

Many Christians regard **prayer** as their "spiritual airbag." What do I mean by that? In the owner's manual of my car is this information: "Frontal airbags for the driver and right front passenger are designed to deploy in moderate to severe crashes." Many Christians believe that **prayer** is like an airbag, to be deployed only in emergencies.

I heard about two fishermen who were caught one day in the middle of a big lake in a small boat when a violent thunderstorm struck. As the waves rose higher and the boat threatened to capsize, drastic measures were in order. So, the men decided to pray. In the teeth of the gale one of the men shouted, “O God, you know that I haven’t bothered you for the past fifteen years, and if you’ll just get us out of this mess, I promise that I won’t bother you again for another fifteen years.” (1)

Prayer is one of God’s greatest gifts to us. Think of it as a God-extender. We have been given the high and holy privilege of channeling some of God’s power to needed places, giving God an added chance to do what he wants to do even before we pray, but has an added opportunity to do because we pray. **Prayer** is not persuading God to do something. It is just laying hold on God’s willingness.

It has been said that the disciples didn’t ask Jesus to teach them how to preach or how to heal; they asked him how to pray (Luke 11:1). The late, great Charles Allen, who led First United Methodist Church of Houston to become the largest Methodist Church in the world, took it a step farther when he said, “the main job of the Church is to teach people how to pray.” And I believe that is true, James 5:6 tells us, ***The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much.*** Imagine how much more when those persons are praying for a common goal.

Growing up in the Baptist Church, I was always amazed when our pastor, The Rev. Charles Harvey, would randomly ask someone to pray during worship. As I grew older, I realized that those folks could boldly do that because they had seen prayer modelled by their pastor, just as the disciples saw Jesus pray.

I have since learned that, when we offer **prayers** in public, we must be careful to address our **prayers** to God rather than to our human listeners. If a pastor were to pray the following **prayer**, what or who would be his focus? “Lord, you know that any contribution that the church receives after December 31st cannot be credited to this year’s expenses, so there is a real urgency to complete pledges right away. Amen.”

I doubt that the Lord needs reminding of what the church’s fiscal year was. That **prayer** was directed to people.

So often—and I am as guilty of this as anyone else—“Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of _____ or those affected by _____. I have to admit that I am guilty of that from time to time.

No, our condolences go to the family but our **prayers** go to God on their behalf. A **prayer** is always sent to God and nowhere else. When Jesus paid the ultimate for our sins on the Cross, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom, signifying that we no longer need a priest to intercede and atone for our sins. Each and every one of us has complete 24/7 access to the Throne Room of God. He hears our each and every prayer, whether public or private.

Jesus, though, urged that most of our **prayers** be private. He knew the temptation of trying to impress people through public **prayers**. When we pray in public, we must ask for God's special help in order to keep ourselves focused on Him.

God is not confused by our bad syntax or grammar. He understands every accent, whether it's a Boston brogue, a Delta drawl, or the clipped lingo of a New York taxi driver. In fact, I understand that New York taxi drivers have caused many people to pray more.

The good news this morning is that none of you is expected to pray out loud in public, except as provided for in our Common Prayers together. By the way, aren't we blessed to have this incredible resource available to us?

We are, however, asking each of you to pray for God's guidance, wisdom, and blessings on us and our leaders as we move forward during this campaign—and beyond.

Here are some things you can pray for:

- Pray for wisdom and discernment, not just for our leaders here at St. Dunstan's, but for the architects and those who will do the actual construction. As decisions are made, pray that all will seek God's wisdom and discern His will to act with integrity and clarity.
- Pray for generous and giving spirits. Ask God to stir our hearts to give generously, not out of obligation, but out of a desire to honor Him and support the work of His Kingdom here at St. Dunstan's.
- Pray for the success of the campaign. Ask for God's blessings that it may exceed expectations and bring glory to His name.
- Pray for the well-being of our church. Ask God to bless St. Dunstan's, its members, and our ministries, that they may continue to grow in faith and love.

Finally, remember that prayer has the power to transform hearts, mobilize resources, and reveal God's will. It is a powerful tool for connecting with God and experiencing His power in our lives. As we pray, we acknowledge our dependence on God and commit to His will in fulfilling the vision for our church.

Let us approach this capital campaign with a spirit of prayer, recognizing that it is a spiritual endeavor that requires more than just financial support. Let us seek God's guidance, wisdom, and blessing as we embark on this journey of faith and stewardship. As we pray, we will not only raise funds for our church, but we will also build a stronger community of faith, strengthened by the power of prayer. AMEN