

# GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH

## THE LESSON: EPHESIANS 1

Have you ever heard of the “church visible” and the “Church invisible”? These terms may seem strange to you, but they point out an important distinction. The *real* Church, the Church invisible, encompasses all those who truly belong to Jesus. It is a reality that transcends time and space. The church visible refers to the local buildings and communities where people gather to worship. The church visible is an imperfect expression of the deeper spiritual reality. Keeping this in mind, believers do give thanks for the buildings where we meet and the human leaders who provide care for our communities. Our deepest gratitude, however, is in knowing that we *really* belong to something and someone greater: the body of Jesus Christ, the capital-C-Church.

Psalm 127:1 says, “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain”. The Church is a house that the Lord is building. Those who belong to it find their identity and purpose in him. They are equipped by the Holy Spirit, and cared for by Jesus the true Shepherd. Though the Church faces many challenges along the way, we know that in the end even “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

*Thanks be to God for the Church: its mission, its equipping, and the glorious future by which it is consoled and inspired.*

## AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Spend some time reflecting on and praying with the words of these prayers (below). (*Note that “Prevent us” in the first prayer originates from an ancient Latin word meaning “Go before us”*).

*Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* (PRAYER FROM THE LAYING OF A FOUNDATION STONE, BCP PAGE 680)

*Most merciful Father, we beseech thee to send down thy heavenly blessing upon thy Church in this Parish, that all its members may dwell together in unity and brotherly love. Keep far from us all self-will and discord. Endue thy Ministers with righteousness, and enable them faithfully to dispense thy holy Word and Sacraments, to bring again the outcasts, and to seek the lost. Grant that we may so receive their ministrations, and use thy means of grace, that in all our words and deeds we may seek thy glory and the advancement of thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* (PRAYER FOR THE PARISH FROM FAMILY PRAYERS, BCP PAGE 736)

# GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH

## EPHESIANS 1: **EVERYTHING THE CHURCH NEEDS**

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup>even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup>which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup>In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup>so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

<sup>15</sup>For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, <sup>16</sup>I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup>that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup>having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup>that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.