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## *Prayer on 9/11*

**An article for the *Cathedral Times* by Dean Sam Candler**

This year, “9/11” falls upon a Sunday. For most of us, the memory of September 11, 2001, still evokes shock, sadness, vulnerability, and even defensiveness. It was the day, of course, that terrorists commandeered commercial airplanes to destroy American lives and attack American life. Like many churches around the world on this Sunday, we will offer special prayers and remembrances for the lives lost in that tragedy.

However, I also want to use this Sunday, and this fall, to address two questions: What is it, really, that we, the Church, offer the world? And what is it, really, that we, as Christians, offer the world?

The general answer is that we all have different gifts; and, thus, we offer those different gifts to the world. Those of us who are bankers offer that gift to the world. Some of us are politicians and elected leaders. Some of us are salespeople. Some are soldiers. Some of us write, or read, or care for children. Every profession, every job, can be a vocation—something we have actually been called by God to offer the world.

The same can be said for churches. Churches—communities of faith—vary in the way we physically serve the world. Some churches have food pantries for the hungry. Some have medical services. Some offer classes and hope. Some provide local farmers markets. Not all churches offer every possible ministry.

However, there is one activity which all Christians, and all churches, do have in common. This is the activity that I want to focus on in the Dean’s Forum throughout the fall. The activity is prayer.

Each of us, no matter what our gifts and talents are, is called to pray. Indeed, we are not merely called to pray. Prayer is probably part of our inner being. We are inspired to pray. We are pulled into prayer. We crave prayer. We are aware that something inside us drives us to prayer.

Still, prayer comes difficultly for most of us, too. Sometimes, the thought of prayer makes us feel guilty, as if we are not praying enough, or as if we are praying all wrong. We become frustrated or bored with trying to continue something that we are not good at.

Along with the horrifying images I recall from September 11, 2001, I also remember an overwhelming one. I remember the hundreds and thousands of people who flocked to churches, within hours of the tragedy. Here at the Cathedral of St. Philip, we had quickly organized a prayer service for 12 noon that very day, and hundreds were here, including people who hadn’t been to church in years.

This Sunday in the Dean’s Forum, at 10:10 am, I will begin a teaching series on prayer: that activity which all Christians have in common, no matter what our other gifts are. We will define prayer, discuss prayer, wrestle with prayer. And, I will use the Book of Common Prayer as a tool that can transport us into deeper forms of prayer, no matter how experienced, or inexperienced, we think we are in that activity.

Prayer. It is our personal entrance into holiness, and into peace. It is also the way we serve the world in its deepest need.

Sam Candler

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