

4. FIREFLIES: Praying for Others

Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man,
carried by four of them.

- Mark 2:3

Fireflies speak a language of love. They communicate with each other through flash patterns of yellowish light, the result of a chemical reaction in their lower abdomen. Each one has a unique flash and they find each other through their twinkling conversation.

The flashes of these tiny beetles, native to Canada, take me back to childhood and warm summer evenings. My siblings and I would rush out with a mason jar and capture a few to take inside as a natural night light. I'm not sure that ever worked. I regret now interrupting their conversation.

The beauty of a field of fireflies is an awesome sight. Fireflies are a lovely invention of summer. They are Mystery. They are Presence. They are Prayer.

A scene in the movie, "A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood" moved me. It's where Mr. Rogers is kneeling by his bed with a small black notebook in hand and praying the names of people. It's a simple practice. It is first mentioned by Mrs. Rogers when she tells the reporter that Fred isn't perfect (he gets angry) and praying for people is one of the ways he deals with anger.

We pray for others sometimes because it is the only way we can cope with our own fear or anger or sense of uselessness. Prayer gives us a space to bring this and to leave it with God so we may rise and act in considered ways.

"I'll pray for you." These aren't just words. This is the offering of the gift of carrying the other, of interceding for them. It is a language of love.

The gospel story in Mark tells of four people who were literally carrying their friend and placing him before Jesus. Isn't that a great image of praying for others with body and soul?

Our firefly prayers bring others into Presence. We do so with intention and trust. We hold space. We carry others in prayer. We embody our intercessions with prayer-filled action. It got Jesus' attention. And it was their faith that brought healing.

"We are here but a little while to learn to bear the beams of love." William Blake
This is a guided prayer that uses your imagination and gestures. Find gestures that work for you. There are three sections. Use all three at once or stay with one, repeating it, as often as you wish. My gratitude to Marilyn Burrell for offering this prayer practice.

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Find a comfortable sitting position. Imagine holding the planet in your cupped hands.

With the eyes of your heart, imagine the continents, oceans, mountains, valleys, forests, deserts and plains. Can you see the whole world in your hands?

Imagine all the peoples of Earth: at war, at peace, in need, in plenty, those who are ill, those who are grieving.

Imagine all the creatures of Earth: four legged ones, winged ones, all that crawl, and all that swim.

Take a moment now to attend in prayer to one part of creation for which you have a deep concern.

Breathe in a silent prayer for this part of creation. Using your hands offer the planet into the Loving Presence of God and hold it there. Opening your hands, release your concern into God's loving care to be loved as only God can love.

Allow your hands to be cupped again. Now hold all the people in your life: family, friends, those at work, in your community of faith, others near and dear to you, even those you are having difficulties with, and those who are often forgotten.

Take a moment now to attend in prayer to someone for which you have a deep concern. Breathe in a silent prayer for this part of creation. Using your hands offer this person into the Loving Presence of God and stay in the moment. Opening your hands, release them into God's loving care to be loved as only God can love.

Allow your hands to be cupped again. Take a moment now to pray for yourself. Pour into your hands your feelings: joy, anger, sorrow, fear. Pour into your cupped hands: your doubts, questions, insights, and hopes.

Breathe in a silent prayer for yourself. Using your hands offer your whole self into the Loving Presence of God and stay in the moment. Opening your hands, release yourself into God's loving care to be loved as only God can love.

**AMEN.**



*Shalom is a Hebrew word. It means something like “peace” but it means much more than that. Jesus told many parables to help us understand Shalom. Maybe he was laughing a little when he told this one.*

“God’s Shalom is like a mustard seed,” Jesus said as he held the tiny seed in his hand.  
“See how tiny it is?”

“You think a mustard seed, can only grow into a small plant? Well, pretend that it can grow big as a tree. Pretend that birds will come and make nest in its branches.”

“Everyone laughed. “A mustard plant as big as a tree?”

“Yes,” Jesus laughed too. “God’s Shalom is like that.”

**(Show the mustard seed)**



Then Jesus told an even funnier story.

“You know the yeast people use to make bread? You can’t see how the yeast works. It just bubbles around inside the bread.

“Well suppose a woman took a tiny bit of yeast. Suppose she mixed it with a lot of flour and water. The yeast would work inside the dough. After a while she would have enough bread to feed a hundred people!”

“You mean one tiny bit of yeast could make all that flour into bread?” someone asked.

“That’s right,” Jesus smiled. “God’s Shalom is like that. You can’t see it working. But it’s there, all the time, working in you and working in me.”

**(Show the bread/yeast)**



“Here is another way to think about God’s Shalom,” said Jesus.

“God’s Shalom is like a treasure hidden in a field. If you know about that treasure you would go and sell all the things you had. Then you would take the money and buy the whole field. You would want the treasure to be yours.”

“Should we want God’s Shalom that much?” the people asked.

“Yes,” said Jesus. “That much!”

**(Show the pearls in box.)**



**The World is the field. God is the buyer of the field. You are the treasure. AMEN**

## M4M – Your Generosity Matters – July 26, 2026 – for Little Current UC Pursuing Peace



Youth Forum group at the beach

*Credit: David McIntosh*

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*The following was written by Ashley Keeping, one of two United Church young adults selected to attend the 2024 Minority Youth Forum in Miyakojima, Japan, hosted by the Center for Minority Issues and Mission. The Youth Forum is an ecumenical initiative of churches in Japan, supported by The United Church of Canada and Mission and Service. Our generosity through Mission and Service helps programs that inspire peace and learning.*

Just like Miyako residents, I live on an island and can relate to their everyday lives on their island, as it was small and humble just like here in Newfoundland. There was one prominent difference. The majority of the residents are seeking peace from their own government, something we don't have to worry about here in Canada. God called upon me to see how the people of Miyako Island are living, and to share with everyone their struggle for peace.

The Minority Youth Forum program brought together young adults from Canada, Japan, and Taiwan. The Youth Forum experience showed me how powerful it is to bring youth together to share our culture, to share our faith, and to share our stories. To be able to have discussions with youth from other cultures about how we can change the world gives me so much hope for our future.

This trip filled my heart with joy, hope, and love for the wonderful people that I can now forever call friends. It also taught me that you need to find, keep, and treasure peace, as well as pursue it for the rest of your time, and that I will do. Thank you, Miyako, for everything you taught me.

Read Ashley's full blog: [Pursuing Peace from the Atlantic to the Pacific](#).

*The views contained within these blogs are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of The United Church of Canada or The United Church of Canada Foundation.*