

The Big Lenten Prayer Tent

This week's offering is from Jayan Koshy of St. John's, St. Paul, Transfiguration Minneapolis, and a postulant for Holy Orders in ECMN.

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I remember quite clearly the first time I ever heard the adhan—the proclamation that calls Muslims to ritual prayer five times a day, every day. Growing up in an Evangelical household, prayer was always an informal affair for me. Something you did in private, on the spot, and (most importantly) without a script. I looked with wonder and admiration at the rhythm of my Muslim friends' prayer life, as day after day they paused what they were doing and gathered to praise God with prayers and movements they knew by heart. So, when I joined the Episcopal Church, I was delighted to find that we have our own rhythm of daily prayer to draw on—the Daily Office!

The Daily Office is a set of liturgies in the Book of Common Prayer that anchor the different parts of our day in prayer. We inherited the Offices from medieval monasteries, but unlike monks, we're not bound to pray all four Offices or keep a strict timetable every day. You can say Morning Prayer whenever you're starting your day, Compline whenever your bedtime is, and so on. The point is to pause throughout your day to spend time in dialogue with God. And the beauty of liturgical prayer is that we don't have to come up with our own words. Each of the Offices consists of Psalms, Scripture readings, canticles (hymns), and prayers that the Church lays out for me in a daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythm. So when I am too tired or distraught to find my own words, I can open my prayerbook and sing or say prayers that I know countless generations of Christians have leaned on before me. I've found that pausing throughout the day to steep myself in Psalms and Scripture helps ground me in an awareness of God's presence that shapes the way I show up in every setting.

I took up Morning and Evening Prayer as a daily practice for Lent 2018, and since then the Daily Office has become a central pillar of my daily life and relationship with God. I started by praying it on my own, and you can too. But the Daily Office is even better when prayed in community, as it was designed. Although it's relatively rare for parishes to offer the Offices as regular services, organizations like the Society of St. Nicholas Ferrar have formed to help people learn how to pray the Daily Office themselves and find others to pray it with. You can find how-to guides and opportunities to pray with others via Zoom [here](#).