



**Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney
Christchurch Prayer Service Thursday 24th February, 2011
St Andrew's Cathedral
Remarks by Archbishop Dr Peter Jensen**

The Bible says, 'God is our refuge and strength a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.' God's word also says that we should pray for all people, for all are in the image of the one God who made us all and cares for us all.

As we are meeting here, tremendous efforts are going on in Christchurch to find the lost, to heal the injured, to bring order out of chaos. We long to help; all our compassion is engaged because of our common humanity, but especially because these are our beloved New Zealanders.

To be so far away seems as though we are helpless. But there are gifts we can send, gifts such as people and money. And one of the most practical things we can do is to pray. The God who is our Father and who looks on us is also their Father and looks on them. Even now he is sustaining and blessing all our human efforts to find and to comfort and to restore. He will hear our prayer.

What should we pray for? At one level this is obvious. We should pray for those who grieve the loss of friends and family, we should pray that the rescuers will find any who are alive but trapped; we should pray that the rescuers will be preserved from harm; we should pray that there will be no more earthquakes; we should pray for those in the frontline of care and communication and leadership; we should pray for friends and family; we should pray that essential services will be restored and disease will not break out. For these and a dozen other things we should be asking our loving Father-God to provide.

But there are more than those immediate needs. Christchurch is a great, proud and beautiful city. Its citizens are living in fear, grief and uncertainty. They need immediate help. They also need the help which strengthens and renews the spirit. They will need it in order to go on, to comfort their children, to work together. They will need what the Bible calls faith, hope and love.

Faith that despite this catastrophe God is at work in their lives, God is the rock that will not move and God can be trusted even when the ground shifts and moves;

Hope that with God at work there is a future, that this crisis will come to an end, that God can and will redeem the most impossible situations and that it is a good thing to lift up their eyes to that future and so walk forward;

Love that will heal the broken hearted and the frightened children, love that will reach out to homeless and afflicted and love that will share meagre resources and their very selves with the stranger.

To have faith, and hope and love is vital. But these are matters that we cannot demand they are the gifts of the spirit and especially the gift which God gives us through his Son Jesus Christ. As we pray, therefore, we ask for all the immediate and necessary things which people need; but we must also ask for the things of the spirit which they will also need and which will be part of giving them the courage to go on, saying 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.'