

## Active prayer can transform communities

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News reports from around the world reveal that honest, compassionate leadership, in which the needs of the people come first, isn't universal. Many citizens suffer when government officials are apathetic or corrupt, or when basic services and infrastructure are neglected. Sometimes warring political or ethnic factions reduce individual communities to chaos, or—if conflict spreads—a menacing military may be waiting in the wings, ready to take power. Visiting such countries is a heartbreaking experience, as I know from personal experience.

Yet our prayers can help improve the current leadership, as well as open the way to a change in leadership so that individuals with a commitment to serving their people come forward.

Some people find it helpful to pray the "Daily Prayer" from the *Manual of The Mother Church* written by Mary Baker Eddy: " 'Thy kingdom come;' " let the reign of divine Truth, Life, and Love be established in me, and rule out of me all sin; and may Thy Word enrich the affections of all mankind, and govern them!" (p.41). This universal prayer encourages us to affirm that God is the Supreme Ruler of all individuals, no matter who they are or where they are. His will for each is loving and good, even if the leadership of a country isn't the best. Rather than focus on the problems we have, we can pray to God for guidance in supporting what will lead to social and economic progress for all. Our prayers, and the resulting prayer-inspired actions, forward our own well-being as well as the good of the nation as a whole.

As the source of intelligence and creativity, God has given each of us the ability to think of—and act on—beneficial ideas as they are revealed to us. Often this means that we join the efforts of others to promote change, but sometimes we'll be inspired to take action by ourselves.

There was a time when schoolchildren, mothers pushing prams, and elderly people all on their way to the bus stop had to use a rough track near my home that was unsafe and difficult to traverse. I complained often to my family and friends about the city council's lack of action on this and other issues. Then one day it occurred to me to pray about this need for a proper footpath.

As a result of my prayer, I realized that since I knew about the situation, I should do something about it. I started by phoning the local council. This statement in *Science and Health* encouraged my endeavor to bless others: "The rich in spirit help the poor in one grand brotherhood, all having the same Principle, or Father; and blessed is that man who seeth his brother's need and supplieth it, seeking his own in another's good" (p. 518). And the Bible reminds us of the power of one person to benefit many through wise thinking and action: "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city" (Eccl. 9:14, 15).

Rather than accept the argument that no one at the council would listen to or act on such a request, I spoke to an official in charge of public infrastructure. A week later the councilor who represented my local area called and thanked me for alerting the council to this need. She told me they weren't aware of everything that needed attention in our city and that they had to rely on constituents like me to tell them. "We'll act on it right away," she said. And within a couple of weeks, the new footpath was in place.

Any of us can pray to express the qualities of discernment and initiative in our efforts to forward change for the better. This is what I call leadership at the grass-roots level.

That experience encourages me to play my part, no matter how small I may consider it to be. Daily prayer for a neighborhood, a state, a country, leads to right actions. In a democratic country, that includes exercising the right to vote, whether for new leaders or on other issues in our communities. When every citizen takes his or her leadership role seriously through inspired prayer, thought, and action, untold blessings are possible!