

The international community, understandably, is finding it difficult and complicated to bring these leaders to justice. But justice will come, we can be assured of that. God will see to it.

PRAY: Pray for the countries of Libya and Syria. Pray that current regimes will be brought to justice and that new governments and rulers will emerge that seek to lead their countries with justice, fairness, respect.

FRIDAY MAY 6

Read: Matthew 5: 10-12

Last week I received an email from Marianne Vandelft. She forwarded me a note that came from her son's in-laws, Warren and Carol Larson (I included a brief note in the bulletin of their recent experience). The Larsons were once missionaries in Pakistan, and are now teaching in a South Carolina university.

On April 27 Warren and Carols's adopted son, Rev. Ashraf Paul, and his family were gunned down by two motorbike riders while traveling in their car. Rev. Paul's son, Sarfraz (age 24), sustained critical bullet injuries.

Rev. Paul is pastor of Hope Fellowship Evangelical Ministry in Hamza Town, near Yaouhanabad, Lahore in Pakistan. On March 30 Paul received a letter telling him to stop his evangelical activities. The letter came from Tkhreek-e-Gazi Bin Shaheed, an Islamic organization in Pakistan. They also told Paul to pay a "poll-tax" otherwise they would kill him and his family. Paul believes the gunmen are connected to this Islamic organization.

For us in the West, Christian persecution often feels distant. Here, through a family in our own congregation, the Vandelfts, persecution is brought much closer to home.

Each week in our bulletin Willy Vandelft calls us to pray for the persecuted. Thank you Willy. Take time today to pray for the church in Pakistan.

PRAY: Pray for Rev. Ashraf Paul and his wife Rubina, and their son Sarfraz. Pray for his recovery and for God's protection on their family, ministry, and church. Pray also for the persecuted in China, and North Korea.

SATURDAY MAY 7

Consider coming to morning prayer today at 6:00AM

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

MAY 1-7, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

CADET SUNDAY

SERMON: "KNOTTED TOGETHER IN CHRIST"

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

PASTOR DAVE GROEN

SUNDAY MAY 1

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY MAY 2

Read: Romans 13: 1-7

Today is election day in our country. MP's will be elected to represent their regions in Parliament, one of which will serve as our next Prime Minister.

If you haven't voted yet today, and you're eligible to do so, you should. Later this week we will pray for countries like Libya and Syria where citizens are protesting, in part, for the right to elect their own government. And many are dying to achieve that right. That alone must make us pause at how fortunate we are to have the freedom to elect those who will govern.

Deciding who and what party to vote for can be a difficult decision. Party platforms at times can be rather vague or "pie-in-the-sky". I encourage you to prayerfully consider who you will vote for.

As important as voting is the need to pray that God's purposes will be served through this election. Pray that the persons of his choosing will be elected and that each will be given wisdom and discernment to govern in ways that honour God and promote justice.

PRAY: Pray for today's federal election.

TUESDAY MAY 3

Read: 1 Timothy 2: 1-6

Were you one of the people who woke up at 2:30 AM last Friday to watch Kate and William tie the knot? I was. I suppose I could have watched a rerun later in the day but for some reason I wanted to see it live. Kind of feels like you're part of history in the making, experiencing a moment with millions upon millions of others.

And I'm glad I did. I must say I felt moved by the ceremony. As many joined in singing the hymns ("Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah", "Jerusalem" were two of them), praying the prayers, and listening to the sermon, I felt grateful and humbled at how the name of Christ was being proclaimed to millions, maybe even a billion around the globe.

Catherine and William wrote a prayer for their wedding day, a prayer that all Christian couples, engaged or married, could pray. This is the prayer: "God our Father, we thank you for our families; for the love that we share and for the joy of our marriage. In the business of each day keep our eyes fixed on what is real and important in life and help us to be generous with our time and love and energy. Strengthened by our union, help us to serve and comfort those who suffer. We ask this in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Paul urges us to pray for those in authority. Granted the *authority* of the Royals is more a figurehead kind of authority than a governing one, never-

theless, their lives can influence and inspire many for good. And that I think is reason enough to thank God for such a public display of a Christian union, and pray that William and Catherine will find their wedding day prayer answered in tangible ways throughout their married life.

PRAY: Pray for Will and Catherine, and others in positions of authority that come to mind.

WEDNESDAY MAY 4

Read: Gen. 1:1-2; Psalm 46: 1-3

For this week's devotions I thought we might pray specifically for events and circumstances that have recently taken place in the world. Monday was the federal election, yesterday the recent Royal Wedding, today the devastating storms and tornados of the U.S. southern Midwest.

Hundreds of people have died in the last couple of weeks, and many thousands have lost homes and livelihoods to massive storm systems of wind and rain.

In Genesis 1:2, we read that in the beginning the earth was "formless and empty." The Hebrew is *tohu wabohu*. This phrase describes emptiness, confusion, and chaos. As God created, he brought order out of the chaos and it was good.

When humankind sinned against God creation suffered. God pronounced a curse. We see evidence of this curse all around us. The result of tornados is mass confusion and chaos; a visible reminder that creation still experiences the effects of sin's curse. The chaos and destruction that we see in the Midwest, that we continue to hear about in northeast Japan invite the world to call upon the name of the Lord who can bring order out of chaos, and who calms the wind and the storm (Mark 4:39).

The Bible calls us to weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). Let us "weep" as we pray, and let us call upon the Lord to bring new hope and beginning out of the storm and chaos.

PRAY: Pray for all the victims of natural devastation and disaster.

THURSDAY MAY 5

Read: Isaiah 40:21-24

Isaiah writes of how Lord "brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing." History is replete with examples: Stalin, Hitler, Caesar, even Solomon as he began serving idols, are telling examples. Two modern day "princes" and "rulers" also come to mind. Leaders that instead of governing their people with justice, are slaughtering them. Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and Bashar al-Assad of Syria are protecting their power through violence and bloodshed. In Syria, ironically, the bloodiest day of protests took place on Good Friday when more than 100 protesters were killed.