

## Wendy's January Prayer Thoughts

2025 marked an important anniversary for the Church worldwide. Celebrations were held to commemorate the deliberations of the 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (modern Turkey), which met under the instruction of the Roman King Constantine! From May -July in the Imperial Palace, some 250-300 Bishops from across the Roman Empire were in attendance, along with presbyters and deacons, so the figure of those present must have been another 1200-1800. They set a uniform date for Easter, drew up over 20 Canonical Laws, and debated the disputed issue of the nature of the Son of God, and His relationship with God the Father, the outcome of which gave us our Nicene Creed.

The Church was in danger of being split. Arius had argued that the Son was a created being, distinct from the Father, whereas Archbishop Alexander held the belief that the Son was co-eternal with the Father, and of the same substance. Hence we repeat in Churches today; "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being (Greek, homoiousios) with the Father, through Him all things were made." The Creed is regularly used and spoken in the World Council of Churches in Geneva, in English, French, German and Spanish translations. Constantine decreed that anyone refusing to adhere to the Creed would be excommunicated.

In October 2025 the WCC met in Egypt to celebrate the 1700 years of the Council of Nicaea with its theme "Where Now for Christianity?" One of the groups was of young ecumenists meeting under the auspices of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute. Among them was Demarius J Walker, who was soon to be priested in the Dioceses of Indianapolis. He wrote of his experience of their reflecting in conversation and prayer with each other. "This was our Sankofa Moment returning to what we are called to do, love, support and pray for one another, and recovering who we are to be to each other - friends. Jesus shows us that the highest form of relationship is that of a friend, and we are implored by the Scriptures repeatedly to live in this way. Luke 6:28. James 5:15. Galatians 6:2 John 15:17. Spiritual friendship is the way we must 'go back and take, if we are to move to visible unity."

Maybe like me, you had not come across the phrase a Sankofa Moment, but it is a great idea to practise, especially as we enter 2026. Sankofa is a word from Ghana's Afkari people, and the Twi language.....

..... Its literal meaning is 'Go back and get. 'San' -to return to, 'Ko' - go, 'Fa' - look, see, take. It is often translated into English as 'Go back and get it'. Its powerful symbol emphasises the importance of learning from the past, in order to make positive progress. So, Sankofa is represented by a bird with its feet planted firmly forward. Its long neck is turned backward, and it holds a precious egg in its mouth ready to place it on its back. Are we, as individuals and as a Church, willing to take from the past, and move on to make further transformation? There should be no standing still in discipleship and witness. We sing, "The cross before me, the world behind me; no turning back." Verse 5 reads, "My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus; no turning back." (Simon Marak).

Now for 2026 let us embrace the concept of Sankofa to deepen our prayer life. Let us learn from the wisdom received from the past, and be open to the Holy Spirit, as we pray for each other with the texts quoted by Demarius, using the Message translation.

1. Luke 6:2. "There's trouble ahead when you only live for the approval of others, saying what flatters them...Your task is to be true not popular" Lord, some are eager to be noticed, waiting to hear approval, praise, thanks from others. May I not fall into that trap, for it is You who should be number One, You who should be glorified and praised with a thousand Alleluias and more! It's not easy to love a self centred person. Lord keep me humble; fill me with Your grace.
2. James 5:15. "Believing prayer will heal you, and Jesus will put you on your feet. And if you have sinned, you'll be forgiven - healed inside out." Lord, help me to trust You more fully in my life for the healings I require and seek for others in my fellowship - physical healing, emotional healing, psychological healing, memory cleansing, sins forgiveness As I bring each before You I do so in love, trusting in God's power and compassion..
3. Galatians 6; 2. "If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical thoughts for yourself." Lord in your eyes, no sinner is greater than another, for all have failed to trust and obey. Spare me from being over critical and judgemental of others by false pride, or self righteousness. Christ, may I love with a forgiving heart like Yours, and isolate no one in the fellowship, but be their support.
4. John 15:17. "You are my friends when you do what I command you." Lord may I never forget my relationship with You, gained through Your amazing love assuring me of forgiveness and eternal life, when You died on the Cross. May I be known as Your friend, and friends of all who love and know You, especially those we have contact with in our Church fellowship. Amen