Always forward . . . even at the pace of a tortoise

-- Mother Gavrilia

This Messenger pastoral message is an expansion of the recent “Wednesday Wisdom” saying recently sent via email.

In that message, I mentioned that:

A culture built around success has to find a way to measure it. Once that way is found, then people's achievements are compared to this.

More often than not, the greatest accomplishment a person can give is to not give up. This matters more than all the success someone can muster and display. The true victory is not in the outcome but in the doing. Our good God sees the effort; He awaits your call for help. Never give up!

One of the natural human tendencies is to compare things. We look at what other people have, or we think they have, and react accordingly. Then come the thoughts and comments, “I wish I . . . .”
The Messenger is a publication of the Saint Luke Greek Orthodox Church of East Longmeadow, MA located at 400 Prospect Street East Longmeadow, MA 01028. For mailing use PO Box 381. To contact the Church Office: 413-525-4551; 413-525-4552 (fax) and stlukego@aol.com. To contact the Pastor call 978-587-6488 or email at frpklostri@gmail.com.

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Pastor- Fr. Panteleimon Klostri

2019 Parish Council
Assaad Hallak — President
Judy Lelas-George — Vice President
Joseph Dasco — Treasurer
Christos Nikolis — Recording Secretary
Evangelie Gouzounis — Corresponding Secretary
John Foscolos
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President - Maria Londo
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Ministries
Chanters - Aristidis Zaharis and Damian Zaharis
Choir Director - Toni Rizas  Organist- Amanda Dee
Endowment Fund - please refer inquiries to Parish Council at this time
GOYA Advisor - Kathy Kalaitzidis
JOY Advisor - Sarah Kirchner
Memorials - Maria Laware
Messenger - Editor - Maria Londo
Stewardship Chairs - Joe and Meghan Dasco
Sunday School
Director - Priscilla Johnson
Assistant Director - Leia Georgeopolus
Outreach Committee - Harry Georgiades
Facilities Committee - Jim Danalis. Jeffrey Clay
Church Secretary- Paula Assad

Bible Study  Tuesday @ 6:30PM/ Friday @ 11:00AM (unless otherwise stipulated)
Orthodox Life - Weds 6:30 PM
Council Meetings  2nd Monday of the month @ 7:00 PM (unless otherwise stipulated)
Dance Practice _TBA
Loaves and Fishes  Pick up on the 3rd Friday of the month
Knitting  1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month @10:30 AM (unless otherwise stipulated)
Romeos and Juliets _ 4th Thursday of the month (unless otherwise stipulated)

Choir Thursday @ 6:30 PM (September 10th - June 10th) (unless otherwise stipulated)

GOYA 3rd Sunday of the month following Liturgy (unless otherwise stipulated)
Hope/JOY 1st Sunday of the month following coffee hour unless otherwise announced

40 to 4 Club-/seeking a volunteer coordinator and meetings TBA
Miles to Smiles- Walking Group Ministry, TBA
Health Ministry- Monthly Blood Pressure during coffee hour, TBA

O Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, intercede with our Merciful God, that He may grant our souls remission of sins
— Apolytikion of Saint Luke
In some cases, people are so paralyzed by what they consider their station in life to be, that they give up. They let their homes go; they remain unproductive at work; personally, they may stop taking care of themselves. They have allowed the expectations of how success is measured to get to them.

But different societies have different standards of success. Can anyone nation or people measure how faithful a person is?

Of course it is a deeply ingrained aspect of our survival instincts to want to compare. Moving our eyes off God, we set them on the apparent achievements of others, with all the wasted time and energy this entails.

Do you know what freedom is? It is freedom from want and care, simply because we are content with what God has provided for us. Freedom is first a spiritual matter, long before it is a political or economic one. Anyone who is free from care and from any lack of trust in God has an inner joy that outward circumstances cannot affect.

How does one achieve this freedom? Through faith! Faith that God is holy; faith that God hears our prayers; faith that He is generous; faith that He loves us; faith that He loves you.

And all this comes together in the Eucharist, where God has called us into the fellowship of His Son. Yes, a large part of our spiritual “security” is in receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.

And for this, all He asks is a little bit of effort from us. Never give up! Out of our poverty of emotions and strength, great blessings come from God!

Have a wonderful month ahead, God bless you all!

With love in Christ,
+ Fr. Panteleimon

Feast: Presentation of Christ to the Temple

The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

Joseph and Mary were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said: "Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshiping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Child she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah.

After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom.

In the Orthodox Church, both baby boys and baby girls are taken to the Church on the fortieth day after their birth. This is done in remembrance of the Theotokos and Joseph taking the infant Jesus to the Temple.
Dear St. Luke Parishioners,

May the blessings of our Lord and Savior be upon all of you and your families!

As the new year resolutions along with the ambitious wishes are being dissolved, one pledge must remain solid and perpendicular to all: your stewardship towards our Orthodoxy faith. Your commitment to Time, Talent and Treasure should be among your top 3 priorities. Your beloved church needs you, needs your hands and minds to build a better future.

We must unite to develop the 2020 vision. We need all of you to step forward and offer your expertise and talents. Financially we are doing Ok, yet we need a strong push to balance our budget. (Ask yourself, can we do better to balance our budget? The answer should always be Absolutely!)

We need some dedicated and committed leaders to assume some of the vacant committee chairmanships. The most urgent one at this time is the Taste of Greece. I am happy to announce that Jim Bologa has assumed the position of the Endowment Committee Chairman. Jim, Charlie Bonatakis, with the help of Jordan, will be filling the remaining positions.

The New Parish Council members are complete now. We are committed to serving our St. Luke community. Together with Father’s leadership; we will be working hard on vision 2020. Father is committed to reach out to all parishioners in a full force more than ever this year. We welcome your suggestions and concerns to better our service and future. Please feel free to drop a note in my mail box. I promise you that I will reach out to you in a timely manner.

I pray to our Lord and Savior to grant us the health, wisdom, patience, and clear leadership in 2019. I hope He guides us to serve him, the church and our parishioners with modesty, love, and unwavering look towards the future.

Good luck and have a great New Year.
Assaad Andrew Hallak
Parish Council President

A special thank you to Georgia Klitsas, Helen Nikolis, and Bess Zaharis for the three beautiful Vasilopita breads and to all who helped us at on Vasilopita Sunday. It is truly appreciated!

Our upcoming Philoptochos Membership Drive will be on Sunday, February 3. We had a wonderful turnout last year and look forward to another great year. Old and new faces can make a difference, so please come and join us.

In recognition of women’s health, we are asking our members of our church community (women and men) to wear RED in solidarity of “Go Red for Women” on February 3.

Last but not least, we fulfilled our obligations for January and to the St. Basil’s Academy and Social Services/Cancer and Other Major Illnesses Fund and February to the Autism Fund and the St. Photios Fund.

I wish you all a very warm month of February!

Maria Londo
Philoptochos President
Dear Fellow Parishioners:

STEWARDS OF THE FAITH: All Things are Possible to the One Who Believes in Christ

And all things are possible at St. Luke! There are so many ways to get involved at St. Luke…. from our parish ministries such as Bible Study, Taste of Greece and Sunday School to our various outreach committees such as Stewardship, Youth Ministries, Philoptochos, and Loaves & Fishes. Each time we devote ourselves to the greater good, we are fulfilled.

We are thankful for all of the stewards who have submitted their 2019 Pledge cards and their Time and Talent cards. We have a very generous parish! Kindly be reminded to return yours if you have not done so already.

We would also like to remind you that the mission of the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Luke is to lovingly serve the liturgical and sacramental needs of Orthodox Christians in our community through the world of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church. By practicing charity through stewardship and Christian ministries, we will create an environment where parishioners are involved in the life of the church.

May God Bless our Many Gifts,

Joe and Meghan Dasco
Co-chairs Stewardship Committee

Start the Day with a Grateful Heart!

We are grateful for everyone who has sponsored this ministry in the past year and some for helping multiple times!

Fellowship time /coffee hour is a vital ministry of church - please consider signing up and stewarding a Sunday fellowship.

Make it as simple as you like- it is all appreciated. Sign up with others - it becomes another opportunity for fellowship.

It is a beautiful offering to remember someone or show friendship and gratitude to those around you. It is one of St Luke’s hallmarks of philoxenia ( showing hospitality to others).

Coffee is made for you and plates and cutlery are all provided. All you need to do is bring something to share and help with clean-up afterwards.

We thank Toni Rizas and Presvytera Eleni who sponsored in the month of January and gratitude to Priscilla Johnson and Bill Sakel for cleanup help.

Current openings are:
February 10, 24
March 10, 17, 24, & 31
Our next meeting will be Friday February 15th at 5:30pm. Ages 5-12 — parents are welcome to sit in and learn the lesson too! Please RSVP with Sarah Kirchner or Father P. so we can prepare.

Irene Dimitroglou, GOYA President

We hope everyone is enjoying the winter time! GOYA had our fall outing to the Apple Place on October 21st, which was our first event for the multiple new members who have joined us. Among our usual activities, this year, we are focusing on outreach to other GOYAs, starting with the St. George GOYA. We look forward to seeing them at our events and attending theirs. Our GOYA dance on the 1st of December was a success! Our next meeting is February 16th. We will continue to discuss the Philoxenia House outing to Boston in the future. We thank all who support GOYA as we continue to pursue our ministry.

Irene Dimitroglou, GOYA President

Romeos & Juliets meet at 12:30 pm on the 4th Thursday of each month. Our next meeting day is February 28th at the Olive Garden - 41 Hazard Avenue, Enfield, CT

Please call Harry Georgiades at 413-883-2560 regarding ushering on Sundays. All are welcome, youths, adults - all ages.

Our practices are weekly on Thursdays at 6:30. Please don’t hesitate to contact Toni Rizas or any choir member if interested.

Knitting Group meeting weekly on Weds in the Church conference room. Dates scheduled:

- February 6th, 13th and 20th
- No knitting on February 27th

There will be no Sunday School on February 17th due to school vacation week.

There will be an ART Sunday during Church school hour on February 24th. All children are welcome. It’s a paint project - dress accordingly.
Photos

Our beautiful Vasilopita cutting in honor of St Basil and to support St Basil's Academy. Thank you to our lovely Philoptochos and for all the wonderful breads made.

Blessing of the Waters and St Luke’s Stewardship Lamp-lighting Ceremony
COME, JOIN OUR CHOIR FAMILY—WHAT’S STOPPING YOU?

*** IT’S TOO BIG OF A COMMITMENT

Choir rehearsals are not necessarily held every week. Rehearsals are scheduled as needed to learn/review special hymns for major Holy days, i.e. Christmas, Pascha.

*** I CAN’T READ MUSIC

Our choir members are not professional musicians. We look at the notes as they go up and down. Traditionally, the hymns we sing every Sunday are the same and we have become comfortable with the melodies.

*** I DON’T HAVE A GOOD VOICE

None of us are trained vocalists. We sing as a group from our hearts and together sing for the Glory of God.

SOME CHOIR MEMBERS THOUGHTS ON WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN...

*** You will be an active part of the Liturgy and Rejoice in singing praises to God.

*** I love being a part of a very special group. I came to St. Luke 7 years ago and immediately joined the choir. I was welcomed and felt and still feel like being a part of a family.

*** Being part of the St. Luke Choir is very special to me. It’s really like a family that welcomes and nurtures its members, both old and new, Greek and non-Greek. We all share the same love of music and our Orthodox Faith and genuinely care about each other. I would urge anyone who enjoys singing to consider becoming a member. You won’t regret it!

If you would like to participate in ANY part of the Lenten period, our schedule for rehearsals is below. Just let Toni Rizas or any choir member know, and we will have music ready for you.

**Thursday, March 7th and 14th** - Rehearsal for SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

**Thursday, March 21st** - 3rd Sunday of Lent

**Thursday, March 28th** - Palm Sunday

**Thursday, April 4th** - Holy Tuesday

**Thursday, April 11th** - Holy Saturday

**Thursday, April 18th** - Good Friday

Rehearsals begin at 6:30.
“Dancing With Heart” 2019

Preparations have been underway since August for our 3rd “Dancing With Heart” event. In coordinating and putting into action an event such as this, all areas need to be covered well! As in the past two years, we have a wonderful committee working with us. Our motto is and has always been that “it takes a team”. We thank each and every member of our team for volunteering or saying “yes” when asked.

“Dancing With Heart” (DWH) is a take-off on the television show “Dancing With the Stars” where a professional dancer from Ballroom Fever is paired with a non-professional good sport! The dancers will take 10 lessons over a period of several months to develop a routine. The end result is amazing...the dance skills have grown; the confidence has built up; the “I’m not sure I want to do this” has turned into “I’m so glad I did this!”

What makes this event ever so special? St. Luke joined in a charitable partnership with Shriners Hospital for Children-Springfield. Last year, half of the net profit, over $17,000.00, was donated to the hospital and was targeted for their new acute care unit. This year we will again be working in tandem with Shriners Hospital for Children-Springfield. We have found them to be a wonderful group of people to work with...so helpful and supportive.

DWH is one of St. Luke’s major fundraisers, second only to the Taste of Greece. Last year’s event turned out to be a much larger event than ever expected...we had 560 people in attendance!! This year’s event will again take place at the same venue, Cedars Banquet Hall located at 375 Island Pond Road in Springfield, MA. Festivities will commence at 7:00 on Saturday, May 11th.

We must say that we have addressed several problems that arose last year due to the huge crowd. The room was very crowded so we have cut back on the number of tickets with only 500 being sold. Also due to the crowd size, seeing the dancers on the dance floor was often difficult. We have followed suit of many other organizations that put on large affairs of this nature and have ordered extra-large screens so that all, no matter where they sit, will have a bird’s eye view of the dancers. We have also worked with the Cedars to ensure that the bar handles the crowd in a more efficient manner. And lastly, but most importantly, we know that many of our parishioners were upset because we could not accommodate them due to the fact that our event sold out two months in advance. In light of that, you will be receiving your packet with information about the DWH event at the beginning of February. We want to give our parishioners a chance to make their reservations before the opportunity goes out to the public a bit later in the month. Once tickets go public, we have no control over ticket sales.

In advance, we thank you for your support!

Co-chairs...Dorsey Cokkinias and Judy Lelas-George
May His Memory Be Eternal

This is one of the hardest eulogies that I have given. It seems like a dream, and I wonder if it is real. I have collected my thoughts, even though there are so many of them, reflecting on the pages of life, remembering a very special human being I call my friend, Elias Zovas.

I have a hard time thinking he is not with us anymore. Looking up at the psaltiri, I almost imagined Elias being here today to sing at his own funeral.

Was it his sweet, melodic voice?
Or, was it that he was gregarious?
Was it his impeccable dress code?
Or, was it his easy going nature?
Was it his incredible garden at home?
Or, was it the history he made with you?

He chanted 394 baptisms here at Saint Luke. 194 weddings, 237 funerals. That’s almost 800 family services. And now he chants with the angels.

He was giving and selfless. Into his nineties, he would still give up his seat as the first chanter so that others could receive the honor.

Elias, I’d say to him, that seat is yours. Why are you giving it up? “Den peirazei Pater, den peirazei” he would say, first in Greek and then English (i.e., it doesn’t matter).

He had a genteel personality that was also very protective, of all the clergy, with a special camaraderie. ‘O, Pater!’ he would say. And when he diligently reviewed the order of services before we began any service, he would ask me if there was anything he should know. And then, he’d say, “Ok, Pater.”

If there was a baptism, he would come down the steps here so he could help the godparent with the towel to receive the baby after it emerged from the font.

At weddings, he would give groomsmen instructions during the ceremony.

I’m not surprised snow is on the agenda this weekend. No matter how much snow there’d be, Elias would have his driveway plowed by 7 am on Sunday and he’d be in church by 8 am ready for liturgy.

In my priesthood, I will never forget the Presanctified Liturgies of Lent. It cannot be described to anyone not experiencing this directly. There is a hymn in the service, “Nyn ai dynamies” “Let now the powers of heaven.” When Elias would chant it, I was transported elsewhere.

He was a chanter from the age of 7. Which means he chanted for 87 years. He was always humble and unassuming, always wanting to learn more. “Pater,” he’d say, “ta xero praktika.” Meaning, I did not learn the Byzantine music in school, but I learned it from my elders who taught me and I learned that way.

But he knew more than others who spend their lives studying the music and the nuances of Byzantine hymnography.

Elias is the embodiment of the man who, as the Greeks say, “den spoudase alla itane morfomenos.” He was not formally educated but truly wise. In other words, he knew more than the rest of us.

The last full conversation I had with him was about a week before he fell asleep in the Lord. Pater, he said in Greek. No one is perfect, no one. You can be perfect one day and then not be perfect the next day. Who, then, can ever say they’re perfect?

When His Eminence was here in September to honor Elias, he told us to look at Elias and see what true service means, what it entails, and to live this way.

I never knew his lovely wife Evelyn, but here is a story. Many of you had seen his garden, which he tended every day, diligently. I totally loved the lemon tree in the garage.

When Evelyn was sick, a small bird entered their home. They named it “Kouchos,” if I remember correctly. This small bird would come into their house every day, spend time with Evelyn and Elias, and leave, only to return again the next day. This lasted for a few weeks.

Here you have a man and his wife who left a mark even on God’s creation. He was a true gift, a treasure.

Anyone who had time with him wanted more time with him. He was born in Greece, in a small village. He endured the horrors of the Second World War. He came to America, always proud of his roots. He engendered such respect even in the stoic New Englander Mrs. Wallace, for whom he worked, that she never stood in the way of Elias going to church for services.

He told me last year that he would retire after Pascha. I wanted him to stay, but then I would have been selfish. He deserved his rest. His last Liturgy was a surprise visit, the Elevation of the Holy Cross on September 14.

May the One elevated on the Cross elevate Elias to psaltic heights in His Kingdom.

His last full day on the earth, he told his children Despina and Peter that he loved them, holding their hands. He was a truly wonderful father, and his wonderful children were there for him throughout his final months. And I cannot emphasize enough how devoted they were to his care! He fell asleep in the Lord in his own home, with his daughter and son with him.

He was a husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather. Of his grandkids, he would always say, “einaikala paideia.” They are good kids. He beamed when talking about his great-grandchildren Gavin and Colton.

We cannot choose our families, but if I could choose anyone to add to mine, it would be Elias.

May Elias’ memory be eternal, may he rest among the righteous, and may the consolation of the saints be with all who love him. Memory eternal!

+ Fr Panteleimon Klostri
How do you prep a fig tree for winter?  
You press it down and cover it with leaves, 
Put a tarp on it and wait for the Spring. 
Guaranteed, you will have the sweetest figs.  
Nothing is absolute except for this.

Your cafenio was a sacred garden. 
A refuge where you sang the hymns of praise. 
You observed the seasons from a bird’s call. 
The skein of the v formation of geese 
Synchronized the psalter’s Byzantine modes.

Elias you could hear the whisper soft 
Voice of God speak to your intuition. 
You never doubted but rejoiced in Him. 
In the Altar you spoke common sense truths 
And watched pitfalls like a desert father.

There was no judgement in your countenance 
Just order and self determination.  
You cooked with the ingredients of love  
And your vegetables were all organic, 
Fragrant care and love for your Evelyn.

My deepest condolences to Despina, 
Peter, Anne, Jamie, Kim and Leah 
Justin, Gregory, Evan, Gavin and Colton.  
My thoughts to the parish of St. Luke.  
May his memory be eternal.

Fr Micheal Sitaras

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A candle will remain lit during services for the next 40 days. 
May his Memory be Eternal.

This is a picture of Elias’s favorite spot to enjoy his garden in the summer- Photo Credit -Eleni Klostri
Lamb Shank Dinner

Our popular pre-Lenten Lamb Shank Dinner be held on Sunday, March 3, following Liturgy. As always, the shank will be coupled with roasted potatoes and green beans as well as salad, bread, dessert, coffee and a glass of wine. And for those not fond of lamb, a pasta/meatball dinner including salad, bread, dessert, coffee, and a glass of wine will be offered. Reservations must be made and paid for in advance of the meal. No tickets will be sold at the door.

New this year, will be the option of “take out” meals. All of the above will be included with the exception of coffee and wine. Take-outs must be ordered and paid for in advance of the meal.

We hope you can join us in the Fellowship Hall for this wonderful meal and opportunity to spend time with your fellow St. Luke parishioners. If you aren’t able to do that, we hope you can enjoy the mean in the comfort of your own home with your family!

Greek Orthodox Church of St. Luke
400 Prospect Street, East Longmeadow, MA

Famous Lamb Shank Dinner
Sunday, March 3rd at 11:30 am

Advance sales ONLY - No tickets sold at the door
Take out available (without beverages)
Deadline for Reservations & Take out orders 2/27/19
Please call: Judy Lelas-George 413-525-4640
Church Office 413-525-4551

Famous Lamb Shank Dinner
$22
Dinner includes:
Lamb Shank
Salad
Roasted Potatoes
Green Beans
Dessert
Coffee
Wine
Chairpersons Melissa Bailey and Peter Vamvili

Spaghetti Dinner
Adults $10 Child (under 12) $6
Dinner includes:
Spaghetti with Meatballs
Salad
Dessert
Coffee
Wine
Memorials

In memory of Elizabeth Cokotis
John and Anita Themistos
Tom and Kathy Themistos
Angelo and Nona Bilionis
Luke and Lorraine Ahladas
Kathy Rodolakis
Ann Flynn
Dorothy Katsoulis Philips
Presvytera Elaine Stephanides and family

In memory of Constantinos Philips
John and Anita Themistos

In memory of Karen Louis
Angelo and Nona Bilionis

In memory of Andrew Alexopoulos
Antonia Rizas

Demosthenes and Marion Dasco
Nick Lefakis and Sarah Lefakis
Angelo and Nona Bilionis

In memory of Dorothy Tompkinson
John and Anita Themistos

In memory of Pete, Mike and John Vamvilis
Patricia Vamvilis

In memory of Harriet Witkowski
Tom and Kathy Themistos
Angelo and Nona Bilionis
Demosthenes and Marion Dasco

In memory of Julia Vernadakis
Ann Flynn

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The Grudge Drudge

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

— Ephesians 4:29 —

Lord, forgive us when we carry a grudge against anyone, whether we have reason for it or not. Help us to see that allowing a root of bitterness to take hold of us only causes us to decay from the inside, damaging our spirits and preventing us from moving on in a positive direction. Bless those who offend us and help us to be willing to let go of the things that grieve us as quickly as we can.

Remind us to be more like You, willing to offer forgiveness that allows us to begin again. Inspire our hearts and minds to desire only good things for each other. Help us to forgive as we have been forgiven, remembering that we too have offended others. Free us of anything that creates a seed of bitterness in our hearts and minds. Amen.

The heaviest thing to carry is a grudge.
— Anonymous