FORWARD THROUGH the YEARS
FORWARD THROUGH the YEARS
FORWARD THROUGH THE YEARS

THE BEST OF FORWARD DAY BY DAY

Forward Movement
Cincinnati, Ohio
For Today

O God:
Give me strength to live another day;
Let me not turn coward before its difficulties
or prove recreant to its duties;
Let me not lose faith in other people;
Keep me sweet and sound of heart,
in spite of ingratitude, treachery, or meanness;
Preserve me from minding little stings or giving them;
Help me to keep my heart clean, and to live
so honestly and fearlessly that no outward
failure can dishearten me or take away the
joy of conscious integrity;
Open wide the eyes of my soul that I may see
good in all things;
Grant me this day some new vision of thy truth;
Inspire me with the spirit of joy and gladness;
and make me the cup of strength to suffering souls;
in the name of the strong Deliverer,
our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

—Phillips Brooks
Preface

Forward Day by Day has encouraged, challenged, inspired, prodded, and empowered millions of people around the world since its conception in 1935. Born in a time when the United States and the Episcopal Church were facing deep divisions and serious challenges, Forward Day by Day immediately became a place where people sought daily connection with scripture and with God. More than eighty years later, Forward Day by Day, a cornerstone of the ministry of Forward Movement, continues with the same conviction that regular, consistent prayer is fundamental for disciples who seek strong spiritual lives.

Guided by this central tenet, Forward Day by Day has also undergone change. What began as a six-times-a-year print devotional is today published quarterly—in large and regular print, as an app and a podcast, on social media, and in English, Spanish, and Braille. Our writers have always relied on a mix of scripture, reflection, and prayer to craft the meditations, but the writers themselves have changed over the years. From a cadre of white, mostly older clergymen, our roster of authors has come to reflect the whole church: lay and ordained; women and men; young and old. Our writers are black and white, Latino, Asian, and Native American. They are straight, gay, married, single, widowed. Not every reader loves every writer, but every writer has something of value for every reader.

The community of Forward Day by Day has changed over the years as well. No longer is the conversation maintained solely at the kitchen table or in-person prayer groups. Today, Forward Day by Day has a half million readers, with print subscribers in more than fifty countries as well as online readers from around the world. A vibrant online community connects every day on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets to wrestle with the reflections and scriptures—and to hold one another in prayer.
What hasn’t changed about *Forward Day by Day* is the timeless wisdom offered in the meditations. As we compiled this collection of the best of *Forward Day by Day*, we were struck by the continuing relevance of entries. One meditation talks about a stranger who knocks on a church door. The man is an immigrant with halting English. The writer wonders how the congregation will respond and beseeches readers to live into the words from Hebrews: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” The year? 1948. A few years earlier, the church visitor had escaped the tyranny of Adolf Hitler. But hide the date, and you might think the author was writing today of our response to refugees fleeing Syria or Mexican immigrants coming to the United States in search of higher-paying jobs. In fact, we encourage you to read the meditations before looking at the dates listed at the end of each devotion. You might often be surprised by when the reflection was written. God’s words—and deep reflection upon them—are timeless. And this compilation can be used year after year, which is why we’ve included a meditation for Leap Day and why we haven’t specified dates for Ash Wednesday, Easter, or other holy days. We want this compilation to be a companion day by day and year by year.

While the wisdom of these meditations transcends calendars, many also reflect the times. The persistent worry of the Great Depression and the terror of World War II is present in meditations from the 1930s and 1940s. By the 1960s, angst and anger with the status quo become common themes. In the 1990s and early 2000s, abundance threads through the discourse. And in 2016, fear surfaces again, spurred by acts of local and global terrorism and all manner of economic and social inequalities.

Because we believe so strongly in the mission of *Forward Day by Day*, we have made it a vital part of our ministry at Forward Movement. Our staff gathers every weekday morning to read the daily devotion and then pray together, both for our local requests
and for those sent in by readers and friends from around the world.
In addition, we actively seek donor support to continue our ministry
of giving nearly 30,000 copies of Forward Day by Day each quarter
to members of the military, people in hospitals and nursing homes,
and prison inmates. We receive letters and calls every day from these
recipients who tell us how their lives have been changed by the words
of God delivered in the pages of Forward Day by Day. In fact, one of
our most beloved writers, whose work appears in this compilation,
was a convicted murderer who, while incarcerated, found a constant
companion in Forward Day by Day—and ultimately forgiveness and
redemption through the ever-abiding, amazing grace of God.

May it be so for all of us.

—Editors, Forward Day by Day
A Morning Resolve

I will try this day to live a simple, sincere, and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God.

In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep, which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right.

And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Savior, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit.
January

FORWARD—day by day—

Bible readings and Meditations for the CHURCH YEAR

Late Trinity Oct.—Nov.

1935
JANUARY 1

Numbers 6:24-26. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

This is the blessing our Lord heard, the one commonly used in the synagogue then as today. Henry Sloane Coffin suggests that it relates to the stages of life. “The Lord bless and keep you” is a petition for youth. As we look on un tarnished youth, we ask God to keep them from temptation, crushing sorrow, loss of ideals, fading vision, being victims of a system.

The Lord’s brightness and graciousness may pertain to our middle years, which need to become years of grace. Life may become a fog, where getting on and making money confuse principle. We can come to see the second-choice situations in middle age as enlarged opportunities.

Age brings both failure and achievement. It gives perspective, when the drama is better understood than when we played in the foreground. May “that unhoped serene that men call age” of which poet Rupert Brooke wrote, and its sense of tranquility after the storm, bring you Christ’s peace.—1941

JANUARY 2

Ephesians 1:16. I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

We often devote all our time with God to asking for what we want. Rarely do we remember to thank him for what he has already given us. Yet it is an afflicted soul who cannot find something or someone to be thankful for, and an unusual soul who cannot find much to be thankful for. But we are so intensely conscious of what we lack and want that we overlook and take for granted what we have.
Few human relationships would long endure on such a basis. Even dear friends or parents might think it best to begin holding back their gifts until some signs of gratitude appear. But God is infinitely generous and never limits his favors to those who are properly thankful. It is not God who is injured by our ingratitude, but us.

We owe God innumerable gifts—all the way from the smallest favor to his “inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ” (The General Thanksgiving in The Book of Common Prayer). Yet our thanks to him are appallingly in arrears. Let no day go by in which you do not number your causes for gratitude and voice your thankfulness in prayer.—1954

JANUARY 3

Hebrews 11:13. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth.

The following words are from The Pilgrim’s Progress, spoken by Mr. Valiant-for-Truth as he crossed the river into the Celestial City: “Then said he, I am going to my Father’s, and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill, to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought His Battles who now will be my Rewarder.”

This is the story of life, and the famous eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells the same story. Even though life makes us feel like strangers and pilgrims on the earth, God is with us and, if we do his will, the end will be with God, too. Life is a pilgrimage, but there are shrines by the side of every road where we may worship him and gain his strength for the next stage of the journey. We are not strangers, come what may, for we are known to God and he loves us. Therefore “valiant be 'gainst all disaster,” by God’s grace.—1951
About the Cover Artist

“EDEN,” the mosaic on the cover, was created by Kathy Thaden. Her study of fine arts and degree in commercial art led her to a career in broadcast design. For twenty-five years, Kathy worked as television art director, animator, and graphic designer—winning numerous honors for design, including seven Emmy awards.

Seeking something more tactile, Kathy’s creativity now comes through her mosaic art. She lives and works in Colorado where her husband is an Episcopal priest. Kathy weaves her passion for modern mosaics together with reflections on God’s gift of creativity during her popular Mosaics as Meditation retreats and workshops.

“Working with broken stone or glass is transforming as pieces are changed, made whole again. Finding beauty in brokenness, I treasure discards from our ‘throw-away’ consumer culture. It’s important that nothing be wasted,” says Thaden.

A full-time studio artist, Kathy’s mosaics range from abstract sculpture and landscapes to liturgical wall hangings and commissioned works. She is a professional member of the Society of American Mosaic Artists, Episcopal Church & Visual Arts, and founding member and past president of Colorado Mosaic Artists. www.thadenmosaics.com
About Forward Movement

Forward Movement is committed to inspiring disciples and empowering evangelists. While we produce great resources like this book, Forward Movement is not a publishing company. We are a ministry. Our mission is to inspire disciples and empower evangelists. Publishing books, daily reflections, studies for small groups, and online resources is an important way that we live out this ministry. More than a half million people read our daily devotions through Forward Day by Day, which is also available in Spanish (Adelante Día a Día) and Braille, online, as a podcast, and as an app for your smartphones or tablets. It is mailed to more than fifty countries, and we donate nearly 30,000 copies each quarter to prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes. We actively seek partners across the Church and look for ways to provide resources that inspire and challenge.

A ministry of The Episcopal Church for eighty years, Forward Movement is a nonprofit organization funded by sales of resources and gifts from generous donors.

To learn more about Forward Movement and our resources, visit us at www.ForwardMovement.org (or www.VenAdelante.org). We are delighted to be doing this work and invite your prayers and support.
Forward Day by Day has encouraged, challenged, invigorated, prodded, and empowered millions of people around the world since 1935.

Timeless in wisdom, these devotions are rich with stories of everyday people who have found love, forgiveness, courage, and redemption through the amazing grace of our risen Lord.

Longtime readers and newcomers alike will love these selections of the best meditations from eight decades. A ministry of Forward Movement, Forward Day by Day is a companion for those who want a deeper connection with scripture and with God.