Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our
being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by
your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

This is the prayer for guidance that is part of morning prayer in the Episcopal church, and probably other liturgical churches. Morning prayer is an ancient monastic office which we today often pray daily in our homes and workplaces. This prayer that is part of it reminds us that everything about us is God and that we are called through our actions to represent that God in the world.

The phrase, “in you we live and move and have our being” actually originated with ancient Greek philosophers and poets such as Epimenides and Posidonius. All people, whether part of a formal religious tradition or not, are created by God and thus yearn for a relationship that is one with that Creator even if they cannot fully articulate who that God is.

As Christians we interpret this phrase in light of our own experience with and traditions about God. We live in God because we were created by God – our life comes from God. Our physical life – our movement comes from God – not an absent, far-away God, but a God that is involved in every detail of God moves and lives and “is” with us. We have our Being in God because we believe in God, because we grow more like God every day, because we have the Holy Spirit (the breath of God) within us.

Because we live and move and have our being with God, we are wrong when we make idols. When we think of idols we sometimes think of statues made out of rock that other ancient religions bowed down in front of and sacrificed to. But idols are anything that we love more than God. They can be pretty sneaky because they often are, in and of themselves, wholesome things, that we let get out of hand. For example, hobbies and sports feed our imaginations and bodies. They are good for us and they help us make the most of the physical and mental strength the Creator gave us. In this respect they are good activities for us to engage in. They honor God because they honor and preserve and strengthen the quality of our living and moving in the world. But they become idols when they become part of our Being, when we live and act as if it is more important that we become the best athlete or the best painter or knitter or coin collector around. They become idols when we would rather spend time with these activities than with God.

Likewise, vocation is a wholesome thing. God, who created us knows that most of us must work to earn money for food so that we can live (or at least that we worked for years so that we could eat and live in retirement). God also calls each of us to live and move within a vocation in a way that is lifegiving to the earth and its creatures. We see that easily in “helping” occupations such as nurses and doctors and counselors and teachers. But this call is true in all occupations. We are called to design, build and sell at a fair price machines or bridges or other products or services that improve life of all those creatures God created. We are called to create through art or music or words or software things of beauty that reflect God. We live and move within these vocations and God moves with us in them. But again, the challenge comes when we try to make these vocations our identity rather than Christ, or even more so when we try to make Christ fit into an identity we’ve created for ourselves as engineer or musician or Tim Horton’s barrister. That’s getting things backwards. Our identity, our Being is through Christ. First and foremost we have our Being with Christ. Christ is in us. We are teachers or sales clerks or musicians as a way of moving, living and being with Christ – as a way of bringing Christ into the world, not the other way around. We are who we are because of Christ. We exist because of Him.

In a way, this is all about love. God loved us so much that he created us and breathed the breath of life into us. God loves us so much that he moves with us in the world. And God loves us so much that God gave us the God’s Holy Spirit to dwell within us, to help us remember all that we know about God, to remember that we exist because of Him – to help us Be God. In return, God calls us to love Him back and to love Him more than anything else. To love the Creator more than the Creation. To love others as we love ourselves. To love God more than anything else is to take our identity from Him, to realize that we are who we are only because of Him and to realize that in Being God in the world we also are called to serve others to move with God and to realize that God moves with us.

The prayer that I started with is on Page 100 in the Book of Common Prayer. Let us pray it together.

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being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by
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