



# Prayer Diary

## July 2016

***‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.’ - Rom 12.2***

Our goal as Christians is to be transformed, and transforming. We want to make a difference - we want to be instruments for the Kingdom of God. We want the world to be different because of us - and the good news is that God wants that, too.

Paul encourages us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds - so how can that happen? It happens as we open ourselves to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, the great agent of life, love, and growth in our world. It’s not something we can achieve by our efforts - but it is something we can hinder, if we fight the changes God is seeking to bring within us.

We know God is at work when we find ourselves surprise by thinking of a situation, or a person, in a new way - a way which seems more generous, perhaps more hospitable, than before. I’m always amazed by the generous response of Provost Howard the day after his Cathedral was bombed - how did he find such grace to reach out in reconciliation? By the renewing of his mind by the Holy Spirit!



As you take some time over this summer for refreshment and renewal, allow God to form you in new ways for his work. You may recall Margaret Thatcher using these words:

- Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
- Watch your words, for they become actions.
- Watch your actions, for they become habits.
- Watch your habits, for they become your character.
- And watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

Be transformed - and that transformation begins in the mind.

**John Witcombe—Dean of Coventry**

## Focus on Alcester Deanery

Alcester Deanery is one of the Deaneries on the outer edge of the Diocese. Geographically we are closer to Birmingham and Worcester Cathedrals than we are to Coventry Cathedral and neighbouring parishes are in Birmingham, Worcester and Oxford Diocese. Sometimes our position can make it difficult for people to feel a connection to Coventry Diocese.

The Deanery has thirty-one churches many set in very rural settings. Some of our churches are themselves on the edge of their villages. For all kinds of reasons, not least, historical, some of our building are on the outskirts of (or even outside) the centres of population.

But being “on the edge” brings both its challenges and opportunities. Sometimes, when reading the Gospels we often find Jesus meeting, or being met, on the outskirts of villages. People would come out to see and listen to him. They were drawn out to him, searching for something.

One of the churches in our group, St Mary’s, Oldberrow is open all day, every day, and the entries in the visitors’ book show us how people are drawn to it and how they find something profoundly important there – a space, an opportunity to draw aside with God. Some return regularly and some write movingly of finding peace and strength. There is something about being away from the centre and “on the edge”; there is perhaps a prophetic voice that can speak from the outside into people’s lives.

Of course, we can’t always stay “on the edge” or stand on the outside. We have to immerse ourselves in our communities. We can’t just sit in our churches expecting people to come. We have to be in the centre witnessing, living out and contending for the good news that God loves us and has shown that love in Jesus Christ. Emmanuel, God with us, God in the midst of us – not standing on the edge.



**David Silvester—Area Dean**

# Cycle of Prayer - July 2016

With a focus on parishes and schools in Alcester Deanery

**Fri 1**

We thank God for the Community of the Cross of Nails. We pray for the Revd Canon Dr Sarah Hills, Coventry Cathedral's Canon for Reconciliation Ministry, as she travels to Germany for three days to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Marienkirche in Lubeck receiving their Cross of Nails.  
\*Henry, John, and Henry Venn the younger, Priests, Evangelical Divines

**Sat 2**

We pray for the curates being ordained as priests today by Bishop Christopher: Sarah Bourne, Kay Dyer, Dwayne Engh, Steve Gold, Charles Higgins, Emma Higgins, Liz Jones, John Langlands, Steve Medley and Nikki Moon. We also pray for Tom Wintle who will be ordained priest tomorrow by the Bishop of Ebbsfleet at St Mary's Nuneaton.

**Sun 3**

Thomas the  
Apostle

We pray for those who will be ordained deacon today by Bishop John: Tim Fox (Coventry East Team), James Holden (Arden Group & Coventry Business Community), Claire McArthur (Walsgrave), Gail Phillip (Kenilworth, St John), Rachel Saum (The Mid-Fosse Parishes). We also pray for the candidates who will be confirmed by Bishop Christopher today at St Paul's Leamington.

**Mon 4**

Coughton Primary School. Headteacher: Adam Walsh. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
As we approach the end of the academic year, we thank God for Linda Waincot, the Diocesan Board of Education and the Multi Academy Trust.

**Tue 5**

Interviews are being held today for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Adviser for Reconciliation. We pray for peace, wisdom and guidance for the candidates and the interview panel.  
We also pray for the licensing of Reverend Diane Thompson as Vicar of All Saints, Emscote in Warwick by Bishop John.

**Wed 6**

We thank God for all those who are in training for ordination. We pray for the sponsored candidates' interview day - a gathering of ordination candidates currently training at theological colleges meeting with the Bishops and members of diocesan staff.  
\*Thomas More and John Fisher, Reformation Martyrs, 1535

**Thu 7**

Heart of England Benefice. Clergy: Peter & Ruth Walker, David Benskin, Kevin Grumball. Reader: Judith Meehan. We thank God for the recently expanded "Party Church" (a local form of Messy Church) and for the continuing opportunities in our four local church schools. Please pray for St Matthew's, that they will be able to re-order and extend their facilities.

**Fri 8**

Salford Priors Primary School. Headteacher: Sally Staley. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
We pray for the meeting of the General Synod. We thank God for the lay and ordained representatives who attend and engage on behalf of this diocese.

**Sat 9**

St John's Aston Cantlow & St Andrew's Wilmcote with Billesley. Clergy: Roy Brown. We give thanks for the priests and people who have faithfully served the parish over many years and we pray for both parishes seeking the appropriate way forward now that they have separated.

**Sun 10**

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

The Alcester Minister Parishes. Clergy: Adrian Guthrie, Sue Henwood, Julian Davey. Readers: Julie Lindsay, John Berry, Patricia Newbold, Gill Laughlin, Daphne Cook. We thank God for encouraging signs following the recently implemented new service structure in the Minster. Please pray for the Open the Book team beginning in primary schools this autumn.

**Mon 11**

During this month there will be many Leavers' Services taking place in parish churches and in schools. Pray for all those making the transition from primary to secondary schools and for all who will be moving to new classes in September, both pupils and teachers alike.  
\*Benedict of Nursia, Father of Western Monasticism, c.550

**Tue 12**

We thank God for the provision of the Mission Fund and for the support it has offered to many churches and deaneries in their projects and efforts in mission. We pray for continued access to support, and enthusiasm for making new disciples in all areas of this diocese.  
We pray for the Glebe Committee which meets this afternoon.

**Wed 13**

Beaudesert with Henley-in-Arden and Ullenhall. Clergy: John Ganjavi. Reader: Malcolm Aldridge. We pray for God's blessing on these churches and communities.  
We pray for the Diocesan Audit Committee which meets today.

**Thu 14**

Dunnington Primary School. Headteacher: Paul Johnson. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
We pray for the Bishop's Core Staff Team meeting taking place all day.  
\*John Keble, Priest, Tractarian, Poet, 1866

**Fri 15**

Alcester St Nicholas' Primary School. Headteacher: Adam Walsh. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, c.862  
\*Bonaventure, Friar, Bishop, Teacher of the Faith, 1274

**Sat 16** We pray for the Revd Dr Canon Sarah Hills, Coventry Cathedral's Canon for Reconciliation Ministry, as she meets with Cathedral parish partners in St Nicholas, Radford Semele today.  
\*Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, 1099

**Sun 17** Arden Valley Benefice. Reader: Alan Gardner. We pray for God's blessing on these churches and communities.  
We thank God for Bishop Christopher's ministry in the diocese and nationally, and pray that he will have a time of rest and renewal this summer.  
*Eighth Sunday after Trinity*

**Mon 18** We pray for the Revd Canon Dr Sarah Hills, Coventry Cathedral's Canon for Reconciliation Ministry, as she runs a course for students from Redcliffe College today and tomorrow.  
\*Elizabeth Ferard, first Deaconess of the Church of England 1883

**Tue 19** Temple Grafton Primary School. Headteacher: Sarah Hendry. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
We pray for the Diocesan Board of Education which meets this evening.  
\*Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, and his sister Macrina, c.394 and c.379

**Wed 20** Mappleborough Green Primary School. Headteacher: Alex Finch. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Margaret of Antioch, Martyr, 4th century  
\*Bartolomé de las Casas, Apostle to the Indies, 1566

**Thu 21** Henley-in-Arden Primary School. Headteacher: Pam Hayes. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
We pray for the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC).

**Fri 22** As many schools finish for the summer holiday, we pray for all families with school-age children. We thank God for the rest and fun that many children will enjoy this summer. We pray for families for whom the extended holiday can bring extra tension, conflict or hardship.  
*Mary Magdalene*

**Sat 23** Wilmcote Primary School. Headteacher: Liz Banyard. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Bridget of Sweden, Abbess of Vadstena, 1373

**Sun 24** Claverdon, Preston Bagot and Wootton Wawen. Clergy: Andy Larkin, Phil Hanson, James Holden. Reader: Norrie Moore. We thank God for the successful appointment of an incumbent. Please pray for our mission and ministry in these parishes as we take seriously our Healthy Churches survey results.  
*Ninth Sunday after Trinity*

**Mon 25** Arden Marches Group. Clergy: David Silvester, Judith Stote, Readers: Sue Ludlow, Pat Wheeler, Joy Holland, Joan Lock, Alan Greathead. We give thanks for signs of growth and for the positive response to our Friday night Outreach and Sunday Youth Cafe. Please pray as we work to make our buildings more usable and accessible.  
*James the Apostle*

**Tue 26** Studley St Mary's Academy. Headteacher: Sue Lambert. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Anne and Joachim, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**Wed 27** Bidford on Avon Primary School. Headteacher: Andy Simms. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Brooke Foss Westcott, Bishop of Durham, Teacher of the Faith, 1901

**Thu 28** Today, as part of the Diocesan Centenary preparations, Bishop John will be leading a Quiet Day for Readers and Clergy at St John the Baptist, Berkswell. We pray that those participating in the Quiet Day feel renewed and restored by the Holy Spirit.

**Fri 29** Wootton Wawen Primary School. Headteacher: Marion Jones. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Companions of Our Lord

**Sat 30** We pray for safe travel for all those going on holidays this summer. Please give care and wisdom to all responsible for carrying passengers on public transport.  
\*William Wilberforce, Social Reformer, 1833

**Sun 31** At the end of National Parks Week, we thank God for the fifteen national parks in Britain. We give thanks for the protection national parks give to God's wonderful creation.  
*Tenth Sunday after Trinity*  
\*Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus, 1556

# What does God expect of us?

It was a bit of a crisis. Euro 2016 had started and there were three games to watch each day. But there was also a Cricket Test Match to watch. To make matters worse there were England versus Australia rugby internationals...and somewhere along the line I had work to do! How could God do this to me? Sometimes he makes life too difficult. What does He expect of me?



Yes, I know it's all a bit trivial – it's only sport. But sometimes in life the conflicting demands on us are very real. What does God expect of us?

The prophet Micah prophesied during a time of great social injustice and he raises the question "What does the Lord require of us?"

His answer begins with "to act justly." In other words, act with fairness, honesty, and integrity. Micah had a special concern for justice, because he saw so little of it. What God requires of us is that we do what is right and fair in our relationships with other people. It can be as simple as being honest in even the smallest routine transaction. This is a consistent theme through the whole Bible.

Secondly we are "to love mercy." We are to be people who act with compassion and kindness toward one another. Notice also that we are asked not that we *have* mercy, but that we are to *love* mercy. We don't just do acts of kindness from a sense of obedience or compulsion, but we do them out of love.

Thirdly, we are "to walk humbly with your God."

The first two things have, in a sense, nothing to do with God. They have to do with how we behave toward one another. But God's third expectation is to have a right relationship with Him – and that always begins with humility, not arrogance.

God expects us to walk humbly with Him. But we are often arrogant and proud. We tend to think that God's role is to make us happy, to serve us, to answer our prayers. But it is we who are to serve and glorify God.

So what does God want from us? Not that much, really. "To act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

**David Silvester**

# "Summer time and the living is easy"

"Summer time and the living is easy." The song evokes thoughts of lazy summer evenings enjoying the warmth of the sun. We might think to ourselves that we would love a lazy summer evening.



But - however the weather might be - we still look forward to a summer holiday. Like everything else, holidays have become more spread throughout the year than they used to be - but the pattern of a summer holiday still persists. It is important to have 'down time,' a time to rest and recharge the batteries.

Rest is a word we hear often enough, but do we always understand its importance in our lives? When I read through the Gospels I am impressed by the relaxed, calm pace Jesus kept from day to day. You never seem to see Jesus in a hurry. Even when one of Jesus' closest friends, Lazarus, was on his deathbed Jesus took his time getting to Bethany to be with him. How is it that Jesus moved through life so slowly and yet accomplished so much?

Rest is not only vital; it is imperative if we are to be effective. Jesus understood this principle and made it a point to get away both with His disciples and by Himself from time to time in order to rest and rejuvenate. It was Jesus' way of 'recharging' His spiritual, physical and emotional batteries. In doing so, He set an example for you and me to follow. By and large we are a people too busy for our own good, too busy to stop and realize that in our frantic busyness we are actually accomplishing less.

Jesus prescribed time off for His wearied disciples after they had returned from a prolonged period of ministry. Shouldn't we take His example seriously? Use the summer to relax physically and renew yourself emotionally and spiritually. So here's looking forward to some easy summer evenings...

**David Silvester**