



Prayer Diary

February 2017

“Ritual is a way of altering time. By which I mean a way of pausing the endless intrusion of busy life.”

Jeanette Winterson

Our world seems to be busier than ever, and it is easy to be overwhelmed. In ministry, whether we are full-time workers for the Church, or weave our service between and into other work and caregiving responsibility, the job is never done. There is always something more we could or should be doing. Rituals mark out a moment with God. They make us stop and be present – neither straining towards the future or fretting over the past. In them, our mind, body, soul and spirit are aligned. We are still and step out of the chronos time of clocks and diaries into the kairos time of God's Kingdom.



I wonder which rituals nourish your spirit and make you linger in God's company. Perhaps it is making the cup of tea to wrap yourself around as you read Morning Prayer. Maybe it is the early morning walk with the dog. It could be the brief Grace which gives a pause before a meal or the bedtime story with a child. As the church year rolls around, other rituals – some traditional religious ones and some more personal – help us enter more fully into the meaning of the different seasons. In a few weeks' time, a smudge of ash will start us on the journey to the cross. What rituals might help you make that journey this year?

Jesus once said that Sabbath ritual was for humanity and not the other way around. Our rituals are to draw us into the life and love of God – recreating us as God's children in a challenging environment which can stretch and misshape us. Why not ask God to guide you to create rituals this year which will renew and enliven you as you live to the glory of God.

Revd Kate Massey
Vicar, Stockingford &
Dean of Women's Ministry

Focus on Southam Deanery

Southam deanery is the smallest deanery in the Diocese of Coventry, currently made up of 18 parishes within a six mile radius of the market town of Southam.

Recent structural discussions for our Deanery Plan have resulted in the creating of the new Offchurch Group which combines four of our small rural parishes into one single entity.

As a deanery we have a strong focus on mission and collaborative ministry. We have a deanery mission team that organise evangelistic events under the national Hope banner. They provide high quality occasions we can be confident in inviting non-Christian friends to.

We have a deanery prayer meeting in the heart of the deanery, Kingdom Come, where people gather from across the deanery, though in small numbers, to pray for the work of God in our parishes and our deanery focus.

There are also a number of deanery Christian exploration and nurture courses that continue to be run which include; Just Looking, Alpha, Discipleship Explored, Lost for Words, and Table Talk. We have also streamed lectures from the School of Theology based at St Mellitus College in London, which have been both well-received and stretching! We use one of our local pubs for many of these courses.

With only a small number of clergy in the deanery, we try to work together, especially with mission and training, and new clergy appointments to the deanery would be encouraged to add their gifts to this creative mix. As a clergy team, we would not be able to function without strong lay teams around us, and we are looking for ways to develop and strengthen these teams both within individual parishes and deanery-wide.

Plans for HS2 will have a significant effect on the deanery as a whole, as we lie directly in the path of the planned route.

We are also experiencing huge changes with new housing developments in a number of villages and Southam town itself, so working together and supporting each other, as well as developing new leaders and exciting new ideas for growth will become even more important.

As a deanery, we have often come up with forward-thinking plans, and it's a creative and stimulating deanery to be a part of.



Graham Nunn and his magic fire Bible during a deanery event.

Revd Martin Green
Area Dean

Cycle of Prayer - February 2017

With a focus on parishes and schools in Southam Deanery

Wed 1 Today we pray for Lizzie McWhirter who is leading Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) update training for all who are anticipating their SIAMS inspection.
*Brigid, Abbess of Kildare, c.525

Thu 2
Presentation of Christ in the Temple
As we celebrate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, we thank God for the faithfulness of Simeon and Anna. We pray that we would learn how to reflect God's light in the communities in which we live, work and learn.

Fri 3 St James' Primary School, Southam. Executive Headteacher: Phyllis King. Head of School: Mrs Kathy Palmizi. We pray for God's blessing upon the pupils, teachers, staff and governors in this school community.
*Anskar, Archbishop of Hamburg, Missionary in Denmark & Sweden, 865

Sat 4 Today is World Cancer Day. Under the tagline, 'We can. I can.' World Cancer Day 2017 will explore how everyone can play a part in reducing the global burden of cancer. We ask God to guide our reflections on what we can do to make a difference to the fight against cancer.
*Gilbert of Sempringham, Founder of the Gilbertine Order, 1189

Sun 5
Fourth Sunday before Lent
Harbury & Ladbroke. Clergy: Craig Grocock, Nikki Moon, Ann Mulley, Martin Wright. Readers: Alison Abbott, Gemma Took, Peter Took. We thank God for growth in our Children's ministry and for the new Children's Church this year. Please pray for continued growth and for our outreach through 'God Stuff' in our local pubs.

Mon 6 Today we pray for Bishop John who is hosting a visit by Pasteur Christian Krieger, his co-chair of the Reuilly Contact Group (a dialogue between UK & Irish Anglican Churches and French Protestant Churches).
*The Martyrs of Japan, 1597

Tue 7 Today is 'Safer Internet Day,' which promotes safe and responsible use of the internet. The aim is to teach young people about how to keep themselves safe online. The theme for 2017 is 'Be the change: unite for a better internet.' We thank God for the many benefits that the internet has brought. We pray for young people known to us; that God may keep them safe.

Wed 8 The Bridges Group. Clergy: Gillian Roberts. Reader: Peter Jackson. We thank God for the work going on across the Group with children & young people and the significant signs of growth. Please pray for the House for Duty interviews at the end of the month and for the Alpha course currently running in the Group.

Thu 9 Long Itchington, Marton, Hunningham, Offchurch, Wappenbury & Weston Wetherley. Reader: Terry Morris. We pray for God's blessing on these churches and communities.
Today we pray for Zoe and Barney Pimentel as they are collated and licensed as Vicar and Associate Minister of St Albans in Coventry by Bishop John.

Fri 10 St Lawrence Primary School, Napton-on-the-Hill. Headteacher: John Brine. We pray for God's blessing upon the pupils, teachers, staff and governors in this school community.
*Scholastica, sister of Benedict, Abbess of Plombariola, c.543

Sat 11 We thank God for those who write songs and hymns for us to use in worship. We praise God for the wide variety of music available to us and for the songs and hymns that have helped us in our faith journey. We pray that God would stir us in musical worship and bless all those who lead, sing and play instruments.

Sun 12
Third Sunday before Lent
Bishop's Itchington and Radford Semele. Clergy: Martin Green. We thank God for new growth and excitement about new opportunities in both communities and across the deanery in mission. We pray for our new headteacher at Radford Semele School, and for developing our work with children and families in both parishes.

Mon 13 Tomorrow a number of events will be taking place across the country for Climate Coalition's 'Show the Love' campaign. During these events people will be encouraged to 'Show The Love' for the people, places and life that could be lost to climate change. We pray that this initiative is successful in highlighting the importance of protecting our planet.

Tue 14 We pray for our link diocese of Kaduna in Nigeria and for Jim and Ann Saxton who will be visiting it shortly. We pray also for our link to the Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem.
*Cyril and Methodius, Missionaries to the Slavs, 869 and 885
*Valentine, Martyr at Rome, c.269

Wed 15 As General Synod meets this week, we thank God for our Diocesan representatives, both clergy and lay, and pray for the on-going conversations and challenges faced by the governing body of the Church of England.
*Sigfrid, Bishop, Apostle of Sweden, 1045
*Thomas Bray, Priest, Founder of the SPCK and the SPG, 1730

Thu 16

We pray for the Diocesan Mission Fund committee as it seeks to make grants available to parishes and deaneries engaging in mission. We thank God for the lives that have been transformed by an encounter with God through many different supported projects. We ask God to stir up a desire and heart for mission in individuals and communities across the diocese.

Fri 17

At the end of Go Green Week, we thank God for this complex and beautiful planet, ask for forgiveness for the times we have abused the resources provided for us and ask God to help us develop a better attitude to the planet.
*Janani Luwum, Archbishop of Uganda, Martyr, 1977

Sat 18

Harbury Primary School. Headteacher: Kate Guymer. We pray for God's blessing upon the pupils, teachers, staff and governors in this school community.
We also pray for the staff who work to support Bishop Christopher and Bishop John and give thanks for them.

Sun 19

Second Sunday
before Lent

We pray for the vulnerable children in our country, their families and the work of organisations like Home for Good. Pray for their work with various Local Authorities across the country, that they would see more people step forward to foster children and teenagers in their area.

Mon 20

We pray for pupils and staff of schools who are on half term this week, for rest and relaxation. We pray for young people who struggle with school, have been suspended or excluded and for those who offer them support and care.

Tue 21

We thank God for the work of the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC). We pray for the therapy services they provide, aimed at helping CRMC clients who may have been affected by traumatic experiences. Many have escaped violence in their home countries where they may have been tortured or seen loved ones jailed or killed.

Wed 22

We pray for those who are unable to leave their homes. We ask God to give encouragement and friendship for those who feel alone. We pray that we would all be aware of those in our communities who are vulnerable, lonely or without support, and that we would be wise and compassionate in our care for them.

Thu 23

Radford Semele Primary School. Headteacher: Jayne White. We pray for God's blessing upon the pupils, teachers, staff and governors in this school community.
*Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, Martyr, c.155

Fri 24

Long Itchington Primary School. Executive Headteacher: Phyllis King. Head of School: Rebecca Richards. We pray for God's blessing upon the pupils, teachers, staff and governors in this school community.
We also pray for Richard Cooke, DDO and Principal of the Diocesan Training Partnership and for all members of the DTP team.

Sat 25

Southam and Ufton. Clergy: Revd Vikki Bisiker. Reader: Stephen Adams. We thank God for all that He has provided last year. We are particularly thankful for the Open The Book ministry in our primary schools and for the strong relationships being built there. Please pray for opportunities to build on these relationships and develop outreach to the 20s & 30s.

Sun 26

Sunday next
before Lent

During National Heart Month we pray for the 2.6million people around the UK suffering with Coronary Heart Disease. We thank God for the British Heart Foundation and other organisations offering support to many, and investing in care and treatment developments for the future.

Mon 27

At the start of Fairtrade Fortnight we give thanks to God for the progress made in ensuring a fairer wage for all. We pray for all who shop where Fairtrade goods are for sale and pray that God would grant us an understanding of the impact of our choices.
*George Herbert, Priest, Poet, 1633

Tue 28

Today is Rare Disease Day, a day to raise awareness about diseases that affect less than 1 in 2000 people. Cures or treatments are not often available for people with rare diseases, and some people have to wait years for a diagnosis. Today we pray for greater understanding of rare diseases.
We also pray for the Diocesan Finance Group which meets this morning.

Massive Messy church



As part of our Deanery Hope14 mission week, I was asked to organise a “Massive” Messy Church, drawing together all the Messy Church teams (and others) from across the deanery to put on a central, joint event. This proved so successful, that we have done it twice a year since then!

It doesn't take too much organising. Once we have agreed a theme – Creation,

Children in the Bible, the Good Samaritan, Harvest – each Messy Church team plans and resources its own activities. We call in special guests to lead the celebration such as the Pilgrim Puppets from Hunningham, the Children's Evangelist Graham Nunn or one of our Open the Book teams. Also we have an amazing catering team who provide a wonderful picnic for us.

We generally attract around 35 families, ranging in age from grandparents to babies – so our activities are tailored to engage everyone. I love to see the dads totally absorbed with their toddlers making a “junk” tractor or the older kids building a catapult to launch maltesers! We always include a quiet space with prayer activities. And this year we introduced a café for the adults, which has enabled the team to have some good conversations with families about faith and Jesus. Some families are now becoming “regulars” and have joined their own local Messy Church and are asking about baptism.

As well as providing opportunities for families to hear the Good News, Massive Messy Church has also brought together the Messy Church teams from across the deanery, enabling them to get to know each other, to share ideas, resources and problems, to invite potential new helpers to join the team and to build confidence. This has been a real encouragement for everyone.

At our next Massive Messy Church in March, we are hoping to work with Lucy Moore, the national Messy Church leader, to test-run her new resources on Messy Science – looking at how faith and science mix.

Please pray for us!

Revd Gillian Roberts
Priest-in-Charge
The Bridges Group of Parishes

What does our deanery mean to you?



Following visits to each of the 18 churches in Southam Deanery, one has to ask if our deanery is an ‘effective structure’ in practice. At each church visited, the question “What does our deanery mean to you?” was asked. In most cases, the response was a blank expression, although the occasional soul vaguely remembered that a deanery rep puts a report in at the AGM.

We're told that the deanery is an administrative function. Have we missed a trick here? Can we make use of the deanery structure? We pray for Christians suffering in other countries, but how often do we think of our brothers and sisters down the road? Perhaps we should do more than pray? Here, “we” means each of the churches in the deanery. Each congregation has gifts/talents that may not be present in other locations. Should we not share them? Think how much more powerfully the Spirit could move if we acted together, and what encouragement could be given, especially to the smaller churches!

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, this doesn't always seem to work. We must ask ourselves:

- How can we help people understand what a deanery is?
- How can we encourage people to attend events outside of their church?
- Even though we are busy with our own churches, how can we make time for our deanery?

In recognition of the lack of time, resources and personnel, and to help the smaller out-of-the-way churches feel less abandoned, The Deanery Mission Team arranges various outreach and training events on behalf of all the churches to be used as a resource in itself. However, it does need the congregations to be aware of what is being done and to actively respond if it is to do any good.

John Eld