

St Matthew's Salford Priors Community Group

Outreach took place early in 2009 where members of St Matthew's knocked on doors in the village to see what needs there were in the village and what assistance they believed their local church could provide. As a result a Community Group was set up in June 2009 and meetings have taken place every week since.

Meeting the villagers on their own doorstep, we discovered that although many people didn't come to church, they still were searching for something spiritually and had lots of challenging questions. They also didn't know their immediate neighbours.

We set up the Group facilitated by two members of St Matthew's church to meet once per week where people could come on their own agenda and over a cup of tea or coffee and a chocolate biscuit (the chocolate biscuits are very important!) and discuss what is on their minds. There are no Bibles, no prayers, no hymns or songs, just an open discussion in a friendly, unthreatening environment for people who are searching for truth and meaning in a society where meaning is often hard to find. That's not to say that the facilitators don't speak about the wonderful message of Jesus; they do, but they are led by what the Group members want to discuss, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

The Group typically has a membership of approximately 8 – 9 people, where 10 is a comfortable group size beyond which it is more difficult to maintain a setting where everyone gets the opportunity to speak if they want to. The Group still grows in numbers through word of mouth. Group members have built strong friendships among themselves where they support and encourage each other and have found a sense of belonging and identity. Some members now attend St Matthew's regularly, others attend other local churches and for the rest who are at an earlier part of their journey, the Group is another "fresh expression" of church.

Prayer would be welcome for the group members and facilitators; for strengthening their relationships, for opening their hearts to hear the Good News and for protection for them all in their individual journey in faith.



Fran Foster



Prayer Diary

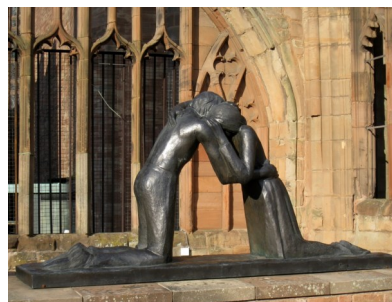
July 2017

The Summer of Love?

In the ruins of Coventry Cathedral there is a statue which is now called 'Reconciliation.' It depicts a man and a woman finding each other again and embracing, falling on each other's shoulders, after being separated by the forces of history, specifically war in Europe, and is by the artist Josefin de Vasconcellos. It captures something of the poignancy of brokenness, and also of the hope and promise of a future. It was used by the Queen as the image to open her Christmas broadcast in 2015, and still speaks to so many of the need and possibility of reconciliation in the world.

It seems that each year that goes by brings the need for reconciliation between different ideologies and different power groups into our minds with greater urgency. The conflict in Syria, the bombing in Manchester and the continuing nightmare of life in Afghanistan invade our TV screens and social media in an apparently unstoppable tide of threat to our hopes for peace.

The season of summer always seems a time when we should be able to 'just chill out' and hope that such forces will pass us by. That's a nice idea, but one that doesn't carry much reality. Instead, God calls us to an honest reckoning of the brokenness of the world, but also to faith in Christ and the reconciliation which he was bringing through him, through the cross, the resurrection, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. In this diocese we are called in a special way to recognise brokenness, but not without hope – and to pray in confidence for the coming of God's Kingdom which overcomes division, which restores the broken to one another, and which offers a new inclusive community to all.



In our prayers this month, can we pray for those who aren't able to share the rest and refreshment of the summer holidays, and for those individuals and organisations who labour to bring peace and hope to places that are broken? And as we do that, to ask God's Spirit to heal our own brokenness, that we may ourselves truly bear peace to those with whom, we spend these summer weeks.

John Witcombe
Dean of Coventry

Focus on Alcester Deanery

Alcester Deanery lies to the west of Stratford and Warwick on the far western edge of Coventry Diocese. The three biggest communities by far are in the west of the deanery, close to the boundary with Worcestershire, spread out along the route of the Roman Road, Icknield Street. These are the ancient market town of Alcester (pop.ca. 6200), and the large villages of Bidford (pop.ca. 5400 to the south and Studley (pop. ca. 5900) to the north.

Whilst there are pockets of light industry, particularly near Alcester, Studley and Bidford, the deanery is quite rural. The deanery has 31 churches, some in beautiful settings and for at least two parking is in the adjacent farmyard. Some churches are in the heart of their community but others are a way outside. The deanery used to comprise more than 30 parishes (currently 24).

For its last major reorganisation, the deanery was asked to plan for just 6.5 stipendiary clergy. In order to achieve this, there was some voluntary, informal re-grouping of parishes which, so far, has resulted in the creation of 4 new united benefices, but two parishes have yet to find a home. Serving multiple communities scattered over wide areas is quite a challenge for the clergy. While there are some non-stipendiaries and lay ministers, a lot of reliance is also put on retired clergy. In fact, we are particularly blessed at present to be served by retired Bishop Christopher Morgan as temporary Acting Area Dean. Two benefices are currently in interregnum which, in a deanery with so few stipendiary clergy, also presents a challenge to church wardens seeking ministers to lead their services.

However, as is well illustrated by the additional articles, the Church is alive in the countryside, reaching out to the young and non-church goers, though, with aging congregations this is not easy and the deanery very much needs your prayers and also support to sustain it and grow it for the future.



Fred Young
Lay Chair

Friday Hot Chocolate at Arden Marches

In March 2011 the Friday Evening Hot Chocolate project started when a group of adult volunteers from our parish set up a table in a car park to serve free drinks and biscuits to any young people who stopped by. Six years on around 15 volunteers are on the rota, with 3-4 people going out every Friday evening.

We aim to show the young people in the village that they are cared about, by having a regular place for them to come for a drink and a chat when they are 'out and about.' By talking and listening, we have established a mutual respect and have not witnessed any bad behaviour.

Numbers fluctuate with the time of year, ranging from no drinks served to over 40. We have watched many young folk 'grow up' from coming to us with a parent after swimming, using the skate park, riding bikes or scooters, to now updating us about their jobs, driving their motorbikes or cars into the car park and still having a hot drink! Some Friday's we just hand out drinks and biscuits with very little talk from the young people; other weeks there may quite a bit of banter and, occasionally, deeper conversations about school, exams, holidays, friends, lack of facilities, politics, faith and numerous other topics.

Parents bring their children and people in the village walking by recognise us, including the community police. In December 2016 we had a planned visit from Bishop John and our group of regular 15 – 16 year olds had quite a serious chat with him.

People come to see what we are doing and are surprised when we tell them it is free. Resources are donated by our congregations or sometimes local people passing by who want to give to something they recognise as being worthwhile. Hot Chocolate continues to be a part of a regular witness within the village.

A young woman came to see what we were doing and told of her childhood experience. Her Mum worked until 10pm so she would often be 'out and about' fending for herself. A safe place to get a drink, a biscuit and talk to people who would listen to her would have been so nice. She said "we never know the lives these kids have and what we do is just great."

The team and our prayer supporters feel we have a ministry to be out amongst those who need to know that they 'are loved' for who they are.



Mon 24

Arden Valley Parishes. Clergy: Interregnum We are praying for a new Incumbent. We praise God for Richard Smith, Norman Warren, Richard Higginbottom and others who have helped out with services during the Interregnum. We thank God for all that Joan Wilkinson and Yvonne Warren do to help out. We praise God for our churchwardens.

Tue 25

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.

James the
Apostle

During National Parks Week, we thank God for the fifteen national parks in Britain and give thanks for the protection they give to God's creation.

Wed 26

Today we pray for the institution of Dexter Bracey to Coventry St John the Baptist by Bishop Jonathan, the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, on behalf of Bishop Christopher.

*Anne and Joachim, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Thu 27

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.

*Brooke Foss Westcott, Bishop of Durham, Teacher of the Faith, 1901

Fri 28

Aston Cantlow. Clergy: Interregnum. We thank God for the life of our Reader David Westcott and all that he did and meant to St John's church. Please pray for St. John's as we continue to seek to bring families into God's kingdom in a variety of ways. Also that a way forward can be found to align us with another parish so we can have some clerical support.

Sat 29

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.

*Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Companions of Our Lord

Sun 30

Seventh Sunday
after Trinity

On World Friendship Day, we thank God for the gift of friendship and pray for our friends. We remember those people who struggle to make friends or who have lost important friendships recently. We pray for new opportunities for friendships to begin, develop and flourish.

*William Wilberforce, Social Reformer, 1833

Mon 31

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.

*Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus, 1556

Cycle of Prayer - July 2017

With a focus on parishes and schools in Alcester Deanery

Sat 1

We pray for the curates being ordained as priests tomorrow morning by Bishop Christopher: Tim Fox (Coventry East Team), Claire McArthur (Walsgrave), Gail Phillip (Kenilworth, St John), Rachel Saum (The Mid-Fosse Parishes).

*Henry, John, and Henry Venn the younger, Priests, Evangelical Divines

Sun 2

Third Sunday
after Trinity

We pray for all those who will be ordained deacon this afternoon by Bishop Christopher: Rupert Allen (Chilvers Coton), Tom Eagles (Coventry St Mark) Liz Harris (Caludon), Lizzy Holland (Berkswell), Noel Phillips (Caludon), Phil Richardson (Eastern Green St Andrew), Alycia Timmis (Warwick St Mary), Adam Tams (Leamington St Paul) & Alex Williams (Edgehill).

Mon 3

Thomas the
Apostle

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.

Tue 4

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 to meet with Bishop Christopher and members of diocesan staff.

Wed 5

Today we pray for Sarah Gillard-Faulkner who will be licensed by Archdeacon John on behalf of Bishop Christopher as Chaplain of Onley Prison.

We also pray for the institution of Hugh Priestner to the Offchurch Group by Bishop Christopher.

Thu 6

We pray for clergy who are currently taking a sabbatical, and for those who are planning one during the next twelve months. We pray that these sabbaticals will bring refreshment, renewal and a re-focus of ministry.

*Thomas More and John Fisher, Reformation Martyrs, 1535

Fri 7

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.

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 8

Heart of England Benefice. Clergy: Peter Walker. Reader: Judith Meehan. We thank God for the recently completed re-ordering of Salford Priors church, and for the pledges that have been made to support a Children/Families Worker. Please pray for the process of recruiting the new worker & finding a new House for Duty priest, for love/unity in a time of change.

Sun 9

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

The Alcester Minister Parishes. Clergy: Adrian Guthrie, Sue Henwood. Readers: John Berry, Julie Lindsay. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.

Mon 10

Beaudesert with Henley-in-Arden and Ullenhall. Clergy: John Ganjavi. Reader: Malcolm Aldridge. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.

Tue 11

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 Glebe Committee which meets this afternoon.
*Benedict of Nursia, Father of Western Monasticism, c.550

Wed 12

We pray for the Cathedral's work with children: for more ways to explore faith with our young choristers and for all those children who visit as part of our schools' programme and for those who will come with families during the school holidays.

Thu 13

Wilmcote Primary School. Headteacher: Liz Banyard. 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 14

As we approach the end of the academic year, we thank God for Linda Wainscot, the Diocesan Board of Education and the Multi Academy Trust.
*John Keble, Priest, Tractarian, Poet, 1866

Sat 15

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.
*Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, c.862
*Bonaventure, Friar, Bishop, Teacher of the Faith, 1274

Sun 16

Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Claverdon, Preston Bagot and Wootton Wawen. Clergy: Andy Larkin, Phil Hanson, James Holden. Reader: Norrie Moore. We thank God for encouraging ministry with children and young people. Please pray for us as we look to move forward in these areas.
*Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, 1099

Mon 17

Coughton Primary School. Headteacher: Adam Walsh. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.
We thank God for Bishop Christopher's ministry in the diocese and nationally and pray that his holiday will be a time of rest and renewal this summer.

Tue 18

Arden Marches Group. Clergy: Interregnum. Readers: Karen Collett, Alan Greathead, Joy Holland, Susan Ludlow, Pat Wheeler. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.
We pray for the Diocesan Board of Education which meets today.
*Elizabeth Ferard, first Deaconess of the Church of England 1883

Wed 19

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.
*Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, and his sister Macrina, c.394 and c.379

Thu 20

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.
*Margaret of Antioch, Martyr, 4th century
*Bartolomé de las Casas, Apostle to the Indies, 1566

Fri 21

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.

Sat 22

Mary Magdalene

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.

Sun 23

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

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.
*Bridget of Sweden, Abbess of Vadstena, 1373