



# Prayer Diary

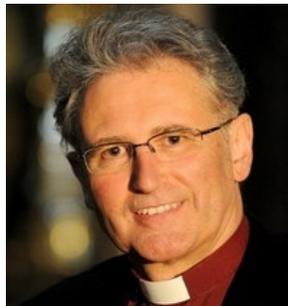
December 2017

## Becoming like a child

For many, this Advent season is a time of excitement and getting ready for family festivities. But it's also a time when many find themselves reconnecting with their own pain, or the pain of others. Christmas conjures up pictures of warm fires, gift-giving and hearty meals, but for many people it can be a lonely time, made even more alienating by the pressure to be 'cheerful', to spend money we don't have, to be outgoing around strangers when deep down, we are missing a loved one, or feeling overwhelmed at the state of the world. It can be hard to remember, in the midst of all this, what precisely is the meaning of Christ's birth, or what message we are really supposed to be celebrating.

The gospels, it's worth remembering, record not just the unusual circumstances of Jesus' birth but also the ministry of a teacher who celebrated and welcomed children into his ministry – one might say, who even presented them as exemplars of human life. 'Truly, I say to you', Jesus said, 'unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 18:3). To his disciples who tried to prevent children from coming close to him, Jesus said, 'Do not hinder them'; and, famously, 'Let the little children come to me ... for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 19:14).

These are mysterious and beautiful statements. But what can it mean to 'become like a child' before Jesus? And how can we live in ways that can allow others to be like children before him? Let us pray this Christmas that God will allow us to recover a sense of wonder at his love, and enable us to love others in a way in that is spontaneous and life-giving, like a child.



**Bishop Christopher**

## The Learning Curve of a New Acting Area Dean

It has been an interesting and steep learning curve being the Acting Area Dean for Coventry East Deanery since 27 July 2017, after our Area Dean, Reverend Clive Hogger, became the Acting Archdeacon Pastor. I was actually commissioned as AAD at our first Deanery Synod after the summer on 7 September, but by then I had already experienced a whistle-stop of various aspects of the role over a very short period. Clive has been a great fount of knowledge during this time, and I very much respect and thank all of our Diocesan Area Deans for carrying out this role.

I have especially enjoyed chairing Deanery Chapter, Deanery prayer meetings, Deanery Pastoral Mission Committee and Deanery Synod. A particular highlight was the privilege of stepping in in the later stages to the joy of assisting in the Area Dean responsibilities for Reverend Bee Arnold's Induction and Collation Service at St Peter's Hillfields!

The most faith-stretching and challenging aspects have been chairing meetings around the enormous uphill task of seeking to raise enough Deanery/Parish Share to pay for ministry in Coventry East Deanery, one of the most deprived deaneries in the Diocese. We are having to throw ourselves upon the loving generosity of God and step out in faith at times when our brains are telling us we cannot humanly achieve this. Jesus' Miracle of Multiplication when 15000 people were fed has been something for us to hold on to, trusting God who is our provider.

We currently have three churches in vacancy - St Chad's, Wood End, St James Whitley and the Binley Woods LEP. I am amazed at, and humbled by, the wonderful way the Lay People in these churches are working sacrificially, using their gifts, to enable and further the ministry and mission of Jesus out of those churches. It is a privilege to be alongside them as they undertake 8 Essential Qualities surveys and draw up parish profiles, praying for the Lord's will to guide and direct them while they seek their next church leaders.

The role of Area Dean can be overwhelming at times, and I constantly fall back on Jesus and thank God ahead of time for the resources in time, energy, guidance and wisdom that I pray he will provide. I think this role could usefully be carried out as a 'job-share', as in some other deaneries, and I would recommend this. Thank you to Bishop Christopher for the learning opportunity of serving as AAD during the period from July 2017 until March 2018.

**Revd Pam Howell**



Pam being licensed at Deanery Synod.

# Cycle of Prayer - December 2017

With a focus on parishes and schools in Coventry East Deanery

**Fri 1** We pray for the Diocesan Board of Education, and for all schools and places of learning throughout the diocese; that they may celebrate the true meaning of Advent and Christmas together.  
\*Charles de Foucauld, Hermit in the Sahara, 1916

**Sat 2** Whitley. Clergy: Interregnum. We thank God for everyone who is helping us to support during this challenging time, particularly Lesley Johnson who is covering most of our services. We look forward to welcoming pupils and families from the local school to their Christmas Services and all who may come to celebrate joy at Christmas on the birth of our Saviour.

**Sun 3** All Saints CofE Primary School. Head: Cara Page. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community. We pray for Bishop Christopher who will be preaching at the Advent Parish Mass at St Mary & St John, Camp Hill.  
First Sunday of Advent  
\*Francis Xavier, Missionary, Apostle of the Indies, 1552

**Mon 4** Today Bishop John will be leading a retreat, entitled "Jesus, The Way" for The Well Christian Healing Centre. We thank God for the work of The Well. We pray for the Diocesan Audit Committee which meets today.  
\*John of Damascus, Monk, Teacher of the Faith, c.749  
\*Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon, Founder of the Little Gidding Community, 1637

**Tue 5** Blue Coat CofE VA School & Music College. Head: Victoria Shelley. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.  
We pray for a Christmas service Bishop Christopher is leading today at St John's Kenilworth to give thanks to Parish Safeguarding Officers.

**Wed 6** This evening Bishop John will be joining in with the St Nicholas Night event in Alcester. Bishop John will parade with the Boy Bishop and pray with him and his attendants in St Nicholas Church. We pray for this event.  
We pray for the Parsonages Committee which meets this afternoon.  
\*Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c.326

**Thu 7** St Chad, Wood End. Clergy: Interregnum. Churchwardens: Lorraine Page and Abbi Brown. Readers: Brian Hewkin, Jacob Matumamboh. We thank God for His continued guidance as we go through this difficult period. We pray for our church to remain strong and faithful while we wait for a new vicar.  
\*Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Teacher of the Faith, 397

**Fri 8** St Bartholomew's CofE Academy. Head: Sarah Rayson. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.  
\*The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**Sat 9** Stoke Aldermoor. Clergy: Buff Forbes Stone. Reader: Julie Watkins-Wollner. We thank God for the growing congregation, our shared youth worker Dave Boyle and partnerships with Credit Union, Foodbank, Aldermoor Farm School and Team Springboard. We also give thanks for a grant from Bishop's Council for a new church building. Please pray that we grow disciples of all ages.

**Sun 10** St Mary Magdalene and Risen Christ, Wyken. Clergy: Linda Mudd. Readers Margaret Robinson, Jane Smith. We thank God for the 50th anniversary celebrations held this year and our continued outreach in the local community to both old and young alike. Please pray for innovative ways in which our financial commitments may be met during the coming year.  
Second Sunday of Advent

**Mon 11** St Peter's, Hillfields. Clergy: Bee Arnold. Reader: John McCoach. We give thanks for the flurry of baptisms over the last few months and for the excitement and new life that it brings St Peter's as well as God's Kingdom! Please pray for growing relationships with St Peter's Centre and for all the work that happens within our walls.

**Tue 12** Stoke St Michael. Clergy: William Smith, Noel Phillips. Readers: Ann Brown, Janet Pocklington, Suzanne Sapiano. We give thanks for all those who have recently begun worshipping with us and pray for the nurture and discipleship programmes that are being put in place for the coming year.  
We pray for the Diocesan Board of Education which meets today.

**Wed 13** Today we pray for Bishop John who is preaching at the Addington Advent Carol Service at St Edmund, Shipston on Stour.  
\*Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse, 304  
\*Samuel Johnson, Moralist, 1784

**Thu 14** Willenhall. Clergy: Pam Howell. We thank God for our recent 8EQs survey results showing growth in outreach to the community of Willenhall and our small groups. Please pray for us to grow lay leaders in the church, encourage with the Bible, and for the recruitment of a Family Link Worker.  
\*John of the Cross, Poet, Teacher of the Faith, 1591

**Fri 15** St Marks, Swanswell. Clergy: Phil Atkinson, Tom Eagles. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.  
We pray for families for whom this Christmas season is a painful time; for parents who have lost sons or daughters; couples who are no longer together; children who are unhappy, confused or in trouble; and those who are alone.

Sat 16

We pray for all those who come to the Cathedral as a 'once a year' experience, that they may have a real encounter with God and be moved to reconsider questions of life and faith. We also pray for the Cathedral congregations, that people may make the transition from being attenders to engaging in authentic community.

Sun 17

We pray that as familiar carols are sung in parishes across the diocese today, the words and meaning of these songs would be embraced afresh by all who sing them. May God be glorified in our Christmas worship.

Third Sunday of Advent

\*O Sapientia

\*Eglantine Jebb, Social Reformer, Founder of 'Save The Children', 1928

Mon 18

Walsgrave-on-Sowe. Clergy: Malcolm Tyler, Claire MacArthur. Readers: Lorraine Baker, Stephen Baker, Susan Morton, Trefor Richards, Tony Thistlewood. We thank God for the completion of renovation work in the church and for the numbers of young people coming to Church. We pray for wisdom in the use of our resources to meet the needs of all parishioners.

Tue 19

Today Bishop Christopher will be leading a carol service at HMP Onley. We pray for all those who will be working at or serving time in prisons over the Christmas period. We pray that as the carols are sung today the words will bring hope to those who sing them.

Wed 20

Stretton CofE Academy. Head: Susan Samra. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community. We pray for the Coventry Prayer House; a praying Christian community at the heart of the city, united across the churches and interceding for revival and transformation.

Thu 21

This evening Coventry Cathedral will be holding their annual Service for the Longest Night at 6pm. The service marks the Winter Solstice and is intended for those whose Christmas celebrations are tinged with sadness. We pray for this service.

Fri 22

Church of The Holy Cross, Wyken. Clergy: Denise Dekker, Liz Harris. We thank God for all those who help to keep this church a prayerful and safe place. We ask that the Lord will guide it forward during times of change. Through the busyness of Christmas we pray for all clergy, Readers and Licensed Lay Workers throughout the diocese.

Sat 23

As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus in a stable surrounded by animals and worshipped by shepherds, we pray for all who are looking after livestock this winter. We pray that there will be enough fodder, and resources to cope with the weather. We also pray for farmers and others working long hours in the cold weather as they care for God's creation.

Sun 24

We pray for the people preparing food in homeless shelters and hostels around the country. May their efforts to feed, clothe and give shelter bring God's blessing to many during this season.

Christmas Eve

We give thanks for the humble birth of Jesus Christ. God, help us to love and serve in humility.

Mon 25

Joy to the World, the Lord is come! As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we pray that many would hear and know the Lord Jesus for themselves this Christmas. Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen.

Christmas Day

Tue 26

Stephen,  
Deacon, First  
Martyr

Potters Green. Clergy: Mike Eaman. We thank God for a new church hall roof, financial wellbeing and growth together in fellowship and love. We also give thanks for the growth of our Friday "Time 4 Tea", an opportunity for people to gather and chat around tea/coffee and homemade cakes, which has enabled us to give generously towards "Water Aid".

Wed 27

John, Apostle  
and Evangelist

St Alban, Coventry East. Clergy: Barney Pimentel, Zoe Pimentel. Zoe and Barney give thanks for the warm welcome they have received and the strong commitment to pastoral care and mission they have encountered at St Alban's so far. Please pray for new small groups that are being set up, especially for an approach that will work best with young families.

Thu 28

The Holy  
Innocents

Binley. Clergy: Jon Taylor. Readers: Paul Lucas, Chris Mellers, Greg Sampson. We thank God for those who've recently joined the church, for the Alpha course, and for Messy Church. We pray for opportunities for outreach in our church school and links with organisations in the parish such as Emmaus and the Food Bank Distribution Centre.

Fri 29

"God of history, Witness of the struggles within families; we pray for the divided family of Syria as brother fights against brother, and sister rejects sister. We pray for those whose love of neighbour has been destroyed in the bitterness of enmity. May fear be submerged in compassion. Amen."  
\*Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr, 1170

Sat 30

All Saints, Coventry East. Clergy: Ali Hogger, Tim Fox. Acceler8 worker: Ian Sweeney. We thank God for our continued progress as a new parish, in particular for the recent service of baptism and confirmation with candidates from both of our sites. Please pray for our new cafe currently being installed, that it would be a focal point in our community.

Sun 31

First Sunday of  
Christmas

Walsgrave CofE VC Primary School. Head: Robert Darling. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school. As 2017 passes and a new year begins, we pray for those who are needing to find hope, purpose and faith in the coming year.  
\*John Wyclif, Reformer, 1384

## Coming to St Alban's

Barney and I have been 'Southerners' our whole lives – I grew up in Surrey and he on the Isle of Wight. But as our joint curacy near Guildford ended, we decided to 'mystery worship' at a church in Coventry that had caught our eye which was advertising for a vicar. We encountered a group of prayerful, welcoming people, with hearts full of love, and a deep commitment to children and young people despite very limited resources. We went home and filled in the application form straight away, and now here we are, 10 months in!

St Alban's have always been supportive of their young people. They financially support their teenagers who fundraise in order to attend Spring Harvest each year, and at the start of every Sunday service, they do a children's song with actions, which every single member, from the youngest to the oldest, joins in with! They are also impressively supportive of changes we have made since arriving, including a brand new crèche area and a projection system. We also put on our very first 'Light Party' this October which saw 26 children through our doors, and only 8 were from regular church families.

We are hoping to broaden our work with young people next year by helping run a Deanery-wide Youth Growing Leaders course with the support of local youth work charity 'Thrive'. None of our Deanery churches have an employed youth worker, but we still deeply care about youth discipleship. This course means that, where many of us may only have one or two teenagers who are more mature in their faith, we can bring them all together in one place, to inspire and invest in them, and equip them in leadership for the future (or the present!).

Moving from a middle class suburban environment to an urban area of deprivation has certainly been a culture shock – but the warmth and openness of the people we've met so far, the energy and enthusiasm of the church to adapt and grow, and the support and friendship we've found among our Deanery colleagues has made the move much easier, and worth every moment.



**Revd Barney and Revd Zoe Pimentel**

## On the move at St Peter's, Hillfields



My name is Bee, I often get called 'Rev Bee'. I have just been installed as Rector of St Peter's following an extended placement there as part of my curacy. We are in the rare position of having a beautiful, modern and fully functional building. The building is run as a community centre by a separate charity and we have an amazing team of staff who make a real difference to Hillfields.

At a time when the struggles of life are on the increase in Hillfields, when homelessness, drug addictions and poverty seem to be more present and destructive, we have felt a growing sense of love for the place God has given us to care for. We are recognising the challenge of letting God's presence be known through us. The church's relationship with the community centre is developing and getting stronger and stronger. For this alone we are very thankful to God. With the help of the centre we are able to engage more openly with the people we seek to serve. So many people are part of this community through the centre and we are increasingly becoming part of that too. First of all through small steps of just being more visible and present. We now meet daily for morning prayer and I think that says so much to the people there of our intention to have God at the centre of all we do and are. I have now joined a few of the regular activities and continue to build relationships.

The church is gradually growing and we have particularly enjoyed a flurry of Baptisms. It seems as if everyone waited until I was 'official'. We have welcomed 9 families and their friends through the doors of church and have especially enjoyed being forced to open the partition to fit everyone in. Of course baptism's are always a joyful occasion where we welcome people into God's family & promise to journey with them. However, for us, it has also been a little reminder of what church could be... full of people and full of life. I particularly enjoyed the service when we baptised both Laila-Rae (in the photo) and her mother Jodie. They have been coming church regularly and Jodie has agreed to help with the crib service we are putting on to invite the baptism families back into church this Christmas. Things are on the move.

**Rev Bee Arnold**