

# Prayer Diary

July 2018

## The Pheasant and the Ladybird



Early this year we had some of our willow trees pollarded (i.e. pruned), and the field was covered in piles of willow branches. It was so wet that the machinery necessary to clear the branches could not get onto the field for another two months.

It took a whole day to clear the branches: at tea time there was a small willow structure in the middle of the field. There, in the grass, was a nest made by a pheasant, with about 10 eggs in it. The pheasant had temporarily disappeared, so the men had made the shelter as a protection for her – and later that day she came back.

She had made her nest in the middle of all the rubbish and debris that had been left in the field, and amongst that rubbish and debris that we were trying so hard to get rid of, in this most surprising of places, new life was springing up.

God has a habit of doing that: in the most surprising of places, amongst what we sometimes dismiss as being of no value, or maybe in the most rubbishy parts of our lives, God brings new life. At the toughest of times, when we least expect it, God's grace flows. We had to look very closely to see the pheasant on her nest: we may have to look closely, and ask God to open our eyes, to see what he is doing.

Equally one had to look very closely to see the ladybird – it was hidden in the tiniest crack in a gatepost, along with what I presume was a young one (answers on a postcard, please, if I am wrong!). Again, new life was there, hidden and coming into being in the most surprising place.

May we be open and expectant to see God at work in the toughest of times, in the most difficult of situations, in the most surprising places. For there He brings new life. Where will you be looking?



**Jill Tucker**  
*Dean of Self-Supporting Ministry*

## Focus on Alcester Deanery

The Alcester Deanery lies in the far west of the diocese and comprises thirty-one communities with church buildings – served by a complement of six stipendiary and three House-for-Duty clergy. The area has a growing population currently standing at around forty thousand. In March 2017 two Incumbencies and two HfD posts were vacant. Since my wife and I were living temporarily in a vacant rectory in the deanery at the time, Bishop Christopher asked me to “fill a gap” and become Acting Area Dean.

I was glad to undertake this task, and six months soon became thirteen. The role has been worthwhile and unexpectedly enjoyable (!); clergy colleagues have been friendly, Dr Fred Young – the Synod Lay Chair – was hugely supportive, and the twelve churches of the Deanery with whom I have managed to share some Sunday worship were all welcoming and appreciative.

More than that, over the course of the year; the Rev. Richard Mutter came to the five parishes of The Arden Valley group last autumn (and is now the new Acting Area Dean!), the Rev. David Benskin was licensed as HfD priest-in-charge of Wilmcote in December, the Rev. James Holden (who also leads the Bishop's Missional Business Community in the diocese) is to begin a substantial pastoral placement in June as Minister-in-Charge of Aston Cantlow, and a new incumbent will be welcomed as Rector of the four parishes of The Arden Marches group, based in Studley, in September.

In this positive scene of arrivals and development the welcome contribution of active retired clergy and of Readers – in aspects of pastoral care and parish development as well as of Sunday services - cannot be exaggerated. It has been a privilege to work with them all. Thank God, there is plenty of wind in our sails yet...

Three Deanery Synod meetings over the past year have also served to underline our connectedness with the wider Church and community at large. Carol Clarke reminded us of our important (gospel-shaped?) responsibilities in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Canon Christopher Lamb and a colleague from the small Muslim community in Stratford led a lively and stimulating session entitled “Yours Interfaithfully” - which happily saw many visitors joining us for this special event. Finally, Ruth Marlow helped us view our own local ministries in the light of diocesan priorities and resources.

It has been a privilege to join a network of communities in which adult Christians have simply been getting on with the job of ‘being church’ – supported and equipped by faithful and talented ministers, ordained and lay. It has also been good to foster the glad recognition that from this beautiful corner of Warwickshire we have things both to offer the wider Church and community – and, crucially too, to receive from them.

**+Christopher H. Morgan**  
*Acting Area Dean*

# Cycle of Prayer - July 2018

With a focus on parishes and schools in Alcester Deanery

**Sun 1**

Fifth Sunday  
after Trinity

We pray for the curates who will be ordained priest this morning by Bishop John: Rupert Allen, Tom Eagles, Liz Harris, Lizzy Holland, Noel Phillips, Phil Richardson, Alycia Timmis, Adam Tams and Alex Williams.  
\*Henry, John, and Henry Venn the younger, Priests, Evangelical Divines

**Mon 2**

We pray for the new deacons ordained yesterday by Bishop Christopher: Barry Coleman, Sharon Crofts, Jo Joyce, Anita Morgan, Esther Peers, Anne Richardson, Jonathan Smith, William Walton and Julie Watkins-Wollner.

**Tue 3**

Thomas the  
Apostle

Bidford on Avon C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Andy Simms. 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.

**Wed 4**

Today Bishop Christopher will be opening the refurbished church hall at St Chad's, Wood End. We pray that this new hall would be a blessing to both the church and the wider community.

**Thu 5**

Arden Valley Parishes. Clergy: Richard Mutter. Reader: Dr Joan Wilkinson. We thank God for our shared sense of community in our five villages. Please pray for those who lead our churches, especially the churchwardens and PCCs. We pray that new people might come forward to join in our church leadership and lead worship and small groups.

**Fri 6**

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.  
\*Thomas More and John Fisher, Reformation Martyrs, 1535

**Sat 7**

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 8**

Sixth Sunday  
after Trinity

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.

**Mon 9**

As schools finish for the summer holiday soon, 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.

**Tue 10**

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

**Wed 11**

Coughton C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Adam Walsh. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
\*Benedict of Nursia, Father of Western Monasticism, c.550

**Thu 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.

**Fri 13**

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.

**Sat 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

**Sun 15**

Seventh  
Sunday after  
Trinity

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

**Mon 16** Studley St Mary's C of E Academy. Headteacher: M Ireland. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
We pray for Bishop John's visit to HMP Onley.  
\*Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, 1099

**Tue 17** Dunnington C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Michaela Griffiths. 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 today.

**Wed 18** Aston Cantlow. Clergy: Revd James Holden (from the 18th of June). We thank God for bringing James to us and for his commitment to furthering God's kingdom in this place. We are so happy to have him. Please pray for us all as we start a new chapter in the life of Aston Cantlow village church.  
\*Elizabeth Ferard, first Deaconess of the Church of England 1883

**Thu 19** Henley-in-Arden C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Adam Walsh. 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 20** Temple Grafton C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Sarah Hendry. 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

**Sat 21** The Alcester Minister Parishes. Clergy: Adrian Guthrie, Sue Henwood, Julian Davey. Readers: Julie Lindsay, Patricia Newbold, Gill Laughlin, Daphne Cook. We give thanks for Minister-wide worship times and for the impact of the Open the Book presentations in primary schools. Please pray for God's guidance in the appointment of a Children and Families Worker.

**Sun 22** Heart of England Benefice. Clergy: Peter Walker. Reader: Judith Meehan. We thank God for additional clergy help offered by Michael and by Fritha. Please pray for the healing of past hurts, for mutual love in the present and for fresh vision for the future of this complex group.  
**Mary Magdalene**

**Mon 23** Alcester St Nicholas' C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Adam Walsh. 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

**Tue 24** Arden Marches Group. Clergy: Interregnum. Readers: Alan Greathead, Joy Holland, Joan Lock, Susan Ludlow, Rosemary Tostevin, Pat Wheeler. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.

**Wed 25** Mappleborough C of E Green Primary School. Headteacher: Alex Finch. 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.

**Thu 26** Wilmcote C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Liz Banyard. 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

**Fri 27** Wootton Wawen C of E Primary School. Headteacher: Marion Jones. 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

**Sat 28** Claverdon, Preston Bagot and Wootton Wawen. Clergy: Andy Larkin, James Holden. Reader: Norrie Moore. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.

**Sun 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.  
**Ninth Sunday after Trinity**  
\*Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Companions of Our Lord

**Mon 30** 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

**Tue 31** Salford Priors C of E Primary School. Headteacher: P Dhugga. We pray for God's blessing upon all the children, teachers, staff, governors and the wider school community.  
We pray for the CCN International Youth Gathering at Coventry Cathedral.  
\*Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus, 1556

## Children and Family



Never have I, as Claverdon's family pastor, felt more like my job is achieving anything than when I had the honour to witness three of my young people confirm their faith. It was a great reminder that my job in children and youth work is about the journey, the sown seed and the gardening than anything else.

In May, at St Peter's Wootton Wawen, our church had the tremendous opportunity to praise God and celebrate the fruit of God's work through our ministry.

So often, we can not see what God is doing through our children and youth work but when young people declare their faith among friends and family the heart of their family pastor implodes with joy and praise.

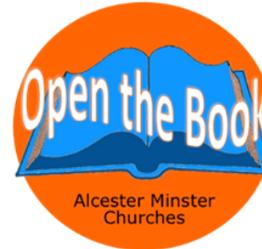
Children, youth and family ministry is a precarious thing. It seems to have everything against it yet thrives when we lift it to God, look for his provision and act obediently. In recent years, at St. Michaels and All Angels, Claverdon we have experienced waves of change.

The youth ministry is seeing the fruit of decades of work in childrens' ministry. It started with the church serving in our local nurseries and Sunday school. Church teams creating community through Messy Church and outreach and others still, of our church, passionately obeyed the call to begin a Christian club in the local primary school which has been tremendously successful. Through these various stepping stones a youth ministry has begun to flourish as a continuance of the child's journey in faith.

The youth club started with 6 devoted young people and now after two years of noisy, energetic leavers from primary school joining the youth, we are growing beautifully. Another wave of change is among Claverdon's youth ministry. A second youth club for upper years will be starting in the autumn to encourage and help young people to continue in their journey with Christ. God is good! I am so encouraged and passionate to see young people learn and experience God's love. God always goes before us, never leaves us and will never let us down.

**Chelsi Argabright**  
*Youth & Families Pastor*

## Open the Book at Alcester Minster Churches



Story telling is magic! I bet you can think back to stories you were told as children. For many of us our knowledge of the Bible started with the stories of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Jesus and Paul that we learnt in 'Sunday School'.

Early in 2016 Revd Adrian Guthrie set out to seek volunteers from the various churches in the benefice, to take stories from the Bible into the four local primary schools within the Alcester Minster Benefice. So, in September 2016, a small team of six actors gave our first tentative performance of the creation story. None of us had any previous experience in amateur dramatics and many of us still cannot learn the script 'off-by-heart' but we enjoy acting out the stories for the children. We go into each school once a month and take over an assembly. We finish each performance with a prayer and then the children sing one of their assembly songs. We try to use 2-3 pupils in each performance often as servants or soldiers. A pupil will usually operate the PowerPoint that supports our performance.

Since our initial performance we have grown in numbers and in confidence. We now have a team of nine actors. We have an artist who makes our props and two ladies who have made our costumes.

What makes it brilliant for us is the excitement on the faces of the children when they see us in school. We are so pleased to act out the stories we learnt as children to today's children. We hope that like us, they will grow up to remember them and what they teach them about God's love for them.

'The team' miss Open the Book in the summer and are all looking forward to starting again in September.

