



Prayer

Where to start
& how to keep going



Church of England Reflections

On 18th April an email from the Church of England dropped into my inbox. It was called "Prayer: where to start and how to keep going". I'm fairly sure I can't be the only recipient of these emails (which are now arriving regularly) although I sometimes feel I am the least conventionally prayerful person I know, so maybe I *have* been selected from the many millions in our land to benefit.

I would love to include here a hyperlink to the reflections but, try as I might, I can find none to share with you. Nor can I find them on the CoE website although I *can* share them with anyone who would like to have them emailed - there is a helpful "share" button which asks me to put in someone else's email address. Let me know if you'd like to share the reflections (or if - being more tech-savvy than I am - you can find the relevant hyperlink (Martin?))

Anyway, here is one particular reflection, to give you a taster:

Where and when should I pray?

- Some people say prayer is like eating. We don't eat all the time, but we need regular meals to resource us for everything else that happens during the day. Think of those times that you set aside for prayer as your chance to sit down and eat with God and receive what you need for the rest of the day.
- Some people say it is like breathing. Something we do all the time.

"Pray all the time," says St Paul. (1 Thessalonians 5.17).

I don't think he means do that activity we call "prayer" all the time. I think he means make your life a prayer. But to do that, we probably need focused moments of prayer. Over time - like a fine wine maturing in the barrel, or an onion being pickled in vinegar - we are slowly changed. We become prayerful.

A love letter from God

The whole Christian story of the birth, life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ could be summed up as a "love letter from God".

In Jesus, God declares his love for us. What we call prayer, those stumbling, faltering words that we use to speak to God, is simply our response.

In other words, prayer can become like breathing. And it needs to be regular like But it is most like loving. And it is most like loving because it is, at heart, a relationship.

This is the most basic truth about prayer. Prayer is relationship with God; it is the relationship we are made for. Like all relationships it is not easy to describe. I know what it feels like to be in love. But it is hard to define it. Put together all the most beautiful love poems in the world and they are as nothing compared with a few moments of love itself.

Being a Christian is like a love affair. In Jesus we see how God gives himself to us in love. "As the Father has loved me," says Jesus, "so I have loved you." (John 15.9)

Prayer is an act of love and a participation in the life of love. In Jesus, God declares his love for us. In prayer we come into communion with God to express our love to him.

So prayer can happen everywhere and anywhere. It's not just something that happens in a church or other special place.

Neither does it depend on special times - although we probably still need those special times to nurture the relationship.

"The whole reason why we pray is summed up in the sight and vision of him to whom we pray ... the more the soul sees God, the more by his grace does it want him."

Mother Julian of Norwich

What images or objects remind you that God is there?

Think about how you could make a special place for prayer at home. When you're on the go, you might try carrying something in your pocket or handbag, or putting an image on your phone's lock screen.

Could you set yourself an alarm to remind yourself it's time to pray?

Think about when you could take a couple of moments in your busy day to check in with God.

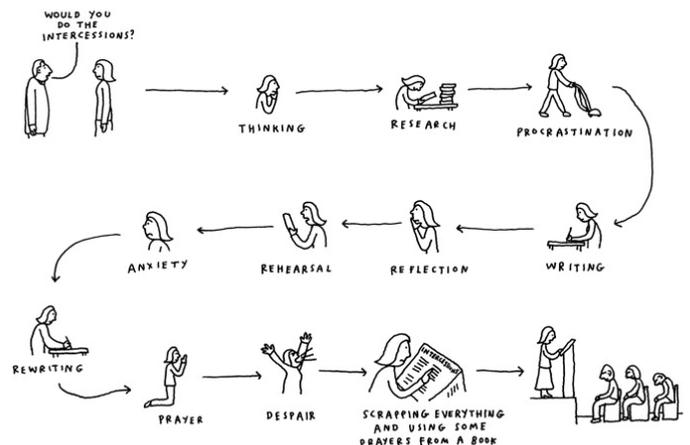
Other reflections so far have covered:

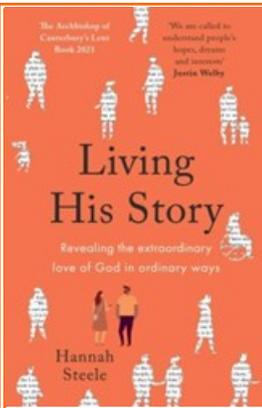
- What is prayer and how do I start?
- How should I pray?



THE INTERCESSIONS

HOW TO PREPARE THEM





Book Review

Living His Story
by Hannah Steele Lent 2021

This was the book recommended by the Archbishop of Canterbury and what a book! If you think that evangelism is standing on a street corner acclaiming God's word, visiting door to door, "mission work" or being a Billy Graham then think again. Whilst these are part of evangelism it is not the whole story. We can all witness.

The book gives a refreshing view on evangelism and was an excellent choice for study over Lent. Reading this and discussing as part of a group has enabled deeper understanding and personal growth.

Following St Michael's Vision Day in February 2020 (doesn't that seem a long time ago after all that has happened this last year!) this is a must read. It is very much in tune with all we wish to achieve. For all who believe and wish to move forwards on their Christian journey it will be an eye opener.

Living His Story is both encouraging and challenging. The book is transformational in the perception of approaches to evangelism and how to spot opportunities to do so.

It is encouraging in that it puts forward a view of evangelism that is invitational; inviting people to share in the blessings of God's love and forgiveness freely offered to everyone and to a new way of living. The emphasis is on forming relationships, showing care, interest, and love; being open about our beliefs. The book highlights the importance of listening and allowing the Holy Spirit to work rather than being adversarial or battling to win someone over to your point of view

It is challenging in that it makes clear that evangelism, bringing people into fellowship with God, is the most important thing we can do. We are joining in with the work of the Holy Spirit. Evangelism is about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to choose to believe and certainly not about filling pews in church. Everything should be done in love; the overriding goal is to help someone to know and to follow Christ. Evangelism should be the natural outpouring of our joy in being forgiven and our relationship with Christ.

The book addresses our reticence, concerns and fears about evangelism: that it is for the "experts"; it is morally dubious; that the gospel is irrelevant to people today; it is lonely, hard work, it is all very well to consider being more outward-going in inviting people to our faith 'but' we are living in England, where people are well known for their reserve, faith is private. Through a series of helpful, funny, and moving examples from her life, the author takes us through her approach to evangelism, giving practical advice and encouragement. The book emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith, giving us confidence in our role simply to make the invitation.

In conclusion, the message of the book can be summarized in the last couple of sentences.

"As we seek to live the story of the gospel, we are privileged to reveal his extraordinary love in ordinary ways, putting our name to his story and inviting others to join us as we do so. There is no task more urgent or wonderful than this."

Sallie Bancroft



Big Screen Project (or the AV Project)

where are we up to?

We are really looking forward to having the new equipment, which will enable us to use a variety of relevant liturgy and resources on a regular basis (without balancing a screen and projector on tables), have a more reliable sound system and hearing loop, and to be able to live stream and record worship more easily, thus making our services more accessible to those who cannot attend the church building, or at the normal time.

We have decided to go ahead with installing:

- A large, single, electric screen which will be located behind the chancel arch (and therefore be invisible when not in use), and a professional quality projector on the front of the 1st floor balcony. We sought the opinions of those who organise large events in the town (such as Barnaby), who all thought this option, rather than the cheaper "TV monitor" option, made the building more attractive and useful as a venue. There will also be two mobile, smaller monitors for those in areas who cannot see the main screen
- Cameras, microphones and equipment for live streaming
- Simpler sound control – we will also remove the cables across the floor, and have a smaller sound desk.

These will be supplied and installed by a company called DSAV, recommended by the CofE.

The total cost will be about £27000, of which we currently have about £17000 in donations and grants. The remainder will be taken from a legacy recently left to the church. (However we have other projects we'd like to spend this on, so if you haven't yet donated, don't let this put you off!)

Timing: We have to obtain a Faculty (like Planning Permission) to make some of these changes to the building. This has been applied for, and a notice has to be displayed for 1 month. The earliest date installation could take place is June, and it is more likely July or August.

Rachel Mayers



Our love, sympathy and prayers go to Bernice, whose sister died recently, and to Paul and Ruth Simms. Paul's brother died a few weeks ago and Ruth's sister Katharine died on Sunday 18th.



Pause for Thought

Adult to a group of children: "What do you think Jesus was doing while he was in hell for three days?"

Child, after long pause: "I think he was looking for his friend Judas."

WHAM

(Macclesfield Churches' Winter Nightshelter) 2020-21

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'"

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25.37-40)

And what did people do? They showed love in abundance.

- *Stayed up all night in the cold, even though they were tired and busy*
- *Offered friendship and acceptance*
- *"Organising" types learned to accept folk as they are, swallowing the urge to tell guests how to organise themselves*
- *Bit back the instinct to react to difficult behaviour*
- *Made any number of coffees at 5.30am (and didn't comment on the amount of sugar!)*
- *Sprayed and cleaned and did loads of laundry, and came back later to empty the dryer*
- *Asked a disruptive guest to leave, to allow others to sleep*



This year the Nightshelter was a very different model: instead of rotating around six Town Centre churches, we had to use one single venue. Guidance was received from Housing Justice's Winter Nightshelter forum, and Cheshire East's Public Health team in how to set up and operate in a Covid-safe manner.

The former "Revolution" bar (Majestic Cinema) at 91-95 Mill Street, was an ideal location, although very minimally equipped (including lacking heating and having hardly any functional lights!), and we were open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights from mid-December to the end of March (45 nights in total). Our four beds were separated by screens, and we only operated an overnight shift (10pm -8am). A hot evening meal (provided, frozen, by the Hope Centre) and a light breakfast were offered. A separate volunteer team came in during the day to clean and set up for the next shift. Overnight volunteers learned to bring plenty of warm clothes and blankets – it took weeks for the place to begin to feel warmer! The 10-hour overnight shift passed surprisingly quickly: preparing meals, serving drinks and the odd, distanced, chat with fellow volunteers or guests. Of course the eyes closed occasionally- only one needed to be awake if all guests were asleep.



Guest's sleeping bay



Volunteer area: note the lack of light and very comfy chairs!

Our guests, all of whom had no alternative accommodation, were either those who had found themselves without a bed after 4pm (ish) on Friday – passing through, "timed out" of a hostel, or recently discharged from hospital or prison; or those who are unable to engage with the statutory offer. Over the winter, 13 different people were accommodated (10 male, 3 female): two males were frequent guests, and were particularly appreciative. We had 11 nights with no guests at all (which is a good result if there is no one sleeping rough) and on 5 nights all four beds were filled. We turned away potential guests only once.

50 different volunteers from many different churches (or none) either stayed all night or came in to clean; others did risk assessments, wrote policies, set up the venue (plumbing, wiring, screens etc), coordinated volunteers. We had amazing support from the Hope Centre, Arighi Bianchi, employees of Cadent and of Appliances Online, Cooper King Distillery, Cheshire East .. who provided meals, comfy chairs, equipment, heaters. Our thanks also go to Kate Hancock (Wains Solicitors), Mike Strutt (St Michael's treasurer), Nigel Panton (BKL Property), Ruth Thompson (medical advice), Town Centre CCTV, Cheshire Police, and also to Macclesfield Town Council, Cheshire East Council and some churches and individuals, who assisted with funding.

Our prayers were answered:

- *Every time we needed something, or particular skills, someone said YES.*
- *We never had to cancel a shift because of lack of volunteers, despite many previous volunteers being unavailable this year. New volunteers came forward.*
- *Everyone, volunteers and guests, remained healthy*
- *At least two guests moved to supported accommodation.*

Rachel Mayers

PEAK DISTRICT CHALLENGE

Sponsorship Request

On Saturday 3rd July I will be taking part in a 50km challenge through the beautiful Peak District.

I will be raising funds for the East Cheshire Hospice and will be doing this once again in memory of my mother (Lesley) who used their services in the latter stages of her life.

I have a fundraising page set up and you can donate here - <https://www.justgiving.com/Chris-Wilcock6>

There is also a sponsor form in the welcome area at church if anyone would like to use that instead.

Thank you for your support,

Chris Wilcock.

Alright, does everyone have sound?



The Last Supper via Zoom



Hurrah!

The Arrhythmics are back!



After a lengthy, Covid-imposed absence, the renowned Arrhythmics are back performing for an audience!

Here they are, playing in the garden at *Belong* on Monday 19th.

They will be performing at Music@Mikes on Thursday 20th May.

Don't miss it! Members include our own Dave Black, Grant Whitten and Paul Spedding, together with Malcolm Mackenzie.

Annual Meeting



St Michael's Annual Meeting (APCM)

As part of the morning service on Sunday 9th May we'll be holding our Annual

Meeting in Church. This is an opportunity to receive a report about everything that's been going on in St Michael's in the last year and to discuss our plans for the next year. It's also when we elect our Churchwardens and members of our Church Council so it's really important that we get as many church members as possible there.

If you want to nominate somebody to be a Churchwarden or Church Council member there are nomination forms on the noticeboard at the back of the church (near the sound desk). If you aren't going into to the building at the moment, please contact Paul Spedding (Church Council Secretary) on 01625 614819 / 07747 622765 or paulspedding@gmail.com



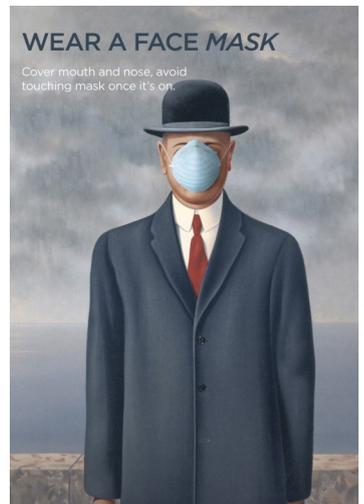
Out of the mouths of babes...

A Sunday School group were all invited to write prayer letters to God.

One boy wrote, "Dear God. We had a lovely time at church today. Wish you could have been there."



Art for a global pandemic



Thinking Creatively about the Churchyard



During the lovely sunny days we have enjoyed over the last few weeks St Michael's churchyard has been full of people – meeting friends, playing, eating and drinking, relaxing in this lovely, sunny open space in the town centre.

Every day hundreds of people are coming to our churchyard, yet most do not enter the building, and often the building is closed.

Ecologically the churchyard is a bit of a desert, with very little biodiversity – which is a real shame given our claims to being an eco-church.

So we have a great opportunity to reach out to the town-centre community, and to actively show our care for God's creation, by re-thinking our use of our churchyard. This would directly support 2 of the strategic objectives we agreed at our Vision Day and that we are currently developing – Encounter and Sustainability (and I am sure there could be some Nurture in there too!).

We have already seen examples of what could be done – the Stations of the Cross, Peter Bradley's use of the railings to share supportive and inspiring messages, and the raised beds with bee-friendly plants; to name but a few.

We have plenty of ideas; but we need more people to get involved if we are to see our vision come true. Please have a word with one of us if you have any ideas of your own and would like to get involved.

Thanks!
Sallie, Lynne, David

 **THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**
Diocese of Chester **Diocesan News**
You can read the April edition of the Chester Diocesan News Update [here](#)



How is Chennai?

Last Sunday we bade farewell to the Lawrence family: Vijay, Esther, Doron, Sharon and Sarah. We have now heard that they have safely arrived in Chennai. We send our love—together with an electronic version of this newsletter! Happy reading - and please send us your news soon!

treacle market

Macclesfield

Treacle Sunday

Shop locally and help regenerate the town-centre

This Sunday 25th April sees the return of the Treacle Market, in a reduced and safe format.

There will be about 30 stalls in the market place between 10.00 and 3.30.

St Michael's will be open to welcome visitors between 11.30 and 2.30 – as well of course for our regular service at 10.00.

As we all know the business sector in our town has suffered a massive financial blow because of the pandemic. Please support the traders on Sunday, and all the local independent businesses that contribute so much to the life and community of the town-centre.

Particularly I want to remind you about;

- **Scoop and Scales** – Macclesfield's own co-operative, zero-waste shop on the ground floor of the Heritage Centre (Old Sunday School). Open: **Wed 10-4, Thurs 10-7, Fri 10-4, Sat 10-4**. They also offer delivery by cargo bike on a Friday. Orders taken by 8pm on a Tuesday will be delivered that week; check the extensive list of available products and order at <https://www.scoopandscales.co.uk/>
- **Indoor Market** - open again, with many excellent stalls selling 2nd hand books, luggage, sweets and much more. My favourites are **Royles** the butcher and Deli, **Fatima's kitchen** selling tasty home-made middle-eastern specialities, and of course **Français** – where Philippe creates the best quiches, terrines and casseroles in town, as well as offering a good quality and excellent value range of fruit and veg.

David Mayers

thankyou

I want to say a BIG THANKYOU to all my friends and church family for the blessings showered upon me to celebrate my special birthday.

Tricia

VACCINATION

AT YOUR LOCAL CHURCH OR CATHEDRAL

YOU'LL NEED TO WAIT YOUR TURN

SOME THOUGHTS, AS WE QUEUE...

KNEELING IS OPTIONAL

PLEASE TAKE THE LITERATURE AND READ IT CAREFULLY

A STEWARD WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY OUT

Ephesians



Monday Evening Home Group

We are studying the book of Ephesians - a book Paul wrote for the believers when he was imprisoned in Rome.

In our first study of chapter 1 we read about God's love for us, His promise and about praying for each other.

Do come and join us as we continue our exploration of this encouraging and challenging book. Chapter 2 next!

Monday 7.30pm in Zoomland (at present). The link can be found in the newsletter on the links page.

We look forward to seeing you.

More recipes from ancient days ...

This week taken from the St Michael's Septcentenary (1978) recipe book. Below see offerings from Tricia Atherton, and Cynthia Cole - plus an intriguing recipe for a "Bible Cake"! If you make it, let us know how it tastes.

CHINESE PORK CASSEROLE.

1½ lbs. pork
1 oz. flour
seasoning
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon dry mustard
2 oz. fat
4 oz. tiny onions or shallots
½ pint stock
medium can pineapple rings
4 oz. diced bamboo or bean shoots (diced peeled cucumber can be used)

Cut meat into cubes. Blend the flour with seasoning, mustard and sugar. Roll the meat in this. Melt the fat and cook the coated meat in this for about 10 minutes. Add onions and cook for 2-3 minutes. Gradually blend in stock and just over ½ pint syrup from can of pineapple. Bring to boil and allow to thicken. Transfer to casserole. Cover and cook for about 1½ hours at 325-350F, Gas 2-3. 15 minutes before serving add diced pineapple and bean shoots or cucumber. Serve with boiled rice or noodles.

Cynthia Cole.

CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT SQUARES.

Base.
4 oz. margarine
2½ oz. crushed corn flakes
2 teaspoon cocoa
3 oz. sugar
4 oz. S. R. flour

Melt margarine in a saucepan. Add dry ingredients. Mix well, then press into a swiss roll tin. Bake for approx. 20 minutes at 325F or Gas 4. Leave to stiffen.

Peppermint.
8 oz. icing sugar
1½ - 2 tablespoons water
peppermint essence
green colouring

Mix to a stiff icing and spread over the base, leave to harden.

7 oz. chocolate
½ oz. butter

Melt in a basin over hot water. Pour over the hardened icing. Mark the chocolate into squares before it sets. When cold cut the cake into squares. Store in an air-tight container.

Tricia Atherton.

Notice pinned on the door to the church crèche

1 Corinthians 15:31

Behold, I tell you a mystery.

We will not all sleep,

But we will all be changed!

J. PHILIP NEWELL



LISTENING FOR THE
HEARTBEAT OF GOD

A Celtic Spirituality

Listening for the Heartbeat of God: Part 2

I am no serious scholar so I am happy to receive guidance from others who are more knowledgeable – keep it coming!

I need to clarify that the Augustine I referred to in my Book Review published 11th April 2021 is **Augustine of Canterbury** who was a monk in Rome in the 6th Century.

Another famous Augustine is **Augustine of Hippo** who lived two centuries earlier than A of C from 354- 430A.D. This Augustine also known as **Saint Augustine**, was a theologian, philosopher, and bishop in the Roman church. He helped formulate the doctrine of original sin and made significant contributions to the development of the just war theory. So presumably, **Augustine of C** was continuing that line of thought and was sent by Rome to convert the pagans of Britain to the Roman style of Christianity. He was chosen by Pope Gregory the Great in 595A.D. to lead a mission to Britain. This led to the Synod of Whitby in AD 664. Augustine of Canterbury became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

Getting back to the book. I like these little niblets:

'It is not believing in Christ that matters, it is becoming like him' (Letters of Pelagius, 1995, p48)

'Deeper than any wrong-doing is the light of God, setting us free, liberating our souls.' (Newell, 1997, p. 14)

'If a person can walk along the way without ever knowing the earthly Jesus then we may say that he is following the spirit of Christ in his heart.' Letters of Pelagius, 1995, p.62

This last quote reminds me of the passage in Acts 17.22-31 when Paul was in Athens and he noticed shrines to 'the unknown god or goddess' When he is asked to give a speech to the Areopagus Paul linked this unknown god or goddess with the Christian God.

Because the Jewish God could not be named, it is possible that Paul's Athenian listeners would have considered his God to be "the unknown god par excellence". So, was the Christian God not a new god but rather the god the Greeks already worshipped as the Unknown God or Goddess?

All very interesting and helped by information from Wikipedia! Acts 17.22-31 – worth another read

'The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made with human hands.' v 24

Please keep the comments coming.

Thankyou. Tricia Atherton

BIBLE CAKE.

1. ½ lb. Judges 5 verse 25 last clause
2. ½ lb. Jeremiah 6 verse 20
3. 1 tablespoon 1 Samuel 14 verse 25
4. 3 of Jeremiah 17 verse 11
5. ½ lb. 1 Samuel 30 verse 12
6. ½ lb. Nahum 3 verse 12 chopped
7. 2 oz. Numbers 17 verse 8
8. 1 lb. Luke 13 verse 21
9. Season to taste with 2 Chronicles 9 verse 9
10. A pinch of Leviticus 2 verse 13
11. 1 teaspoon of Amos 4 verse 5
12. 3 tablespoons of Judges 4 verse 19

Beat Nos. 1, 2, 3 to a cream, add 4, one at a time still beating. Then add 5, 6, 7 and beat again. Add 8, 9, 10, 11, have previously mixed them and lastly 12. Bake in a slow oven for 1½ hours.

N. B. Leaven means baking powder.

Join us for
Sunday Worship



St Michael's Worship 25th April 2021
Fourth Sunday of Easter
Merged service this week at 10.00am:
live in church / from home on Zoom

To join by Zoom click on the image or use
 Meeting ID: 939 7279 7379
 Password: 01625

Service Leader: Rachel Mayers
 Talk: Mike Strutt
 Reading: John 10:11-18



Can't join us live? Watch the recording of our morning worship service on Zoom at a time to suit you after Sunday lunchtime [here](#)

Wednesday Morning Discussion
11.00am to 12 noon
 Join Zoom meeting [here](#)
 Meeting ID: 971 3599 5784
 Passcode: 01625




Monday HomeGroup
 When? 7.30pm - 9pm Monday evenings
 Join Zoom Meeting [here](#)
 Meeting ID: 910 4838 5228
 Password: Monday

For more information contact Martin [by email](#) or 01625 426110.

No Computer? No problem!
 You can still join any of these Zoom meetings and services with your landline phone

If phoning:
 Dial **0330 088 5830**.
 When prompted, enter the **Meeting ID** from any of these boxes **followed by #**
[For Sunday's service: 939 7279 7379]

When prompted, enter #



Thursday Homegroup
 We meet via Zoom at 7.30pm using same details as before. All are welcome to join for Bible Study, prayer and fellowship, including by phone. Please contact David Mayers by [email](#) or phone 01625 420716 or 07963 802659. We are studying *The Prayer Course* at the moment.




Email any [prayer requests](#) here



St Michael's Church is now open daily 11.00am-1.00pm for private prayer

DONATIONS: Donating to the church for general purposes has been made simpler. Either click on the blue Donate button or scan the QR Code.



Giving to the work and worship of St Michael's
 Click here to donate towards our church's ministry 

