

St. John's, Lindow

IN TOUCH

Easter 2017

Prayer

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of"

Alfred Tennyson

Members of St John's will know that we are in the middle of a strategy review - taking a look at ourselves and what we're doing as a church in light of what God says we should be doing! We began by reminding ourselves from the New Testament that making disciples of Jesus is the core activity that God has given to his church and that such discipling happens by 'the proclamation of the Word of God in prayerful dependence on the Spirit of God'. So it is helpful that the topic of this magazine is prayer! In our core activity of discipling it is God who does the work (1 Corinthians 3: 6,7). Christians are simply the instruments he uses. Remembering that keeps us praying - humbly, earnestly, constantly asking God to do what only he can do - grow disciples of Jesus.

But many of us struggle with prayer. Our 'Theology Corner' tackles the stumbling block of unanswered prayer on page 11. Sometimes our struggle is because we forget or underestimate what a wonderful privilege every Christian has in our access to God. How awesome that a sinful wretch like me can approach God and, rather than be destroyed by his holiness, be welcomed through the Lord Jesus and granted free access to his throne! Remembering just how amazing this privilege is helps me to use it.

Another reason Christians struggle to pray is because we measure our relationship with God on our feelings. But faith is not a religious feeling - it is

dependence on God, and the important thing about trust is not how strong the trust is, or what it feels like, but whether the thing or person you're trusting in is trustworthy. Do you think you are less of a



Christian when you feel discouraged? Perhaps what you're relying on is not Christ but the quality of your faith? It's a common mistake. But it is not our faith that saves us. It is Christ who saves us through his atoning death and glorious resurrection. He has done the work. Our part is simply to trust in his great trustworthiness. Prayer is the verbal expression of that faith. Sometimes we might feel like praying, sometimes we won't. Those feelings are natural and common (to sinful people like us) but they are no indication of the quality or effectiveness of our prayers.

Indeed if we wait till we feel like praying some of us might never pray again! If you're relying on Jesus don't listen to the voice that says you need to be in a certain mood before you can pray. God is very willing and able to listen to the requests of his children and is utterly trustworthy to grant every good thing.

Simon



I don't think I've ever seen the vicar pray so hard!

Ben Hollinshead

VIEW FROM THE PEW

Eugene Rangayah

Gareth: Eugene, you're an Indian South African, born into a Hindu family, brought up under apartheid in the 1970s, 80s & 90s and when I met you in 2011 you were part of a Roman Catholic church. So how come you're part of our church family here in Wilmslow in 2017?!

Eugene: Well, I'll need to cut a very long story very short! Basically my father became a Christian when I was seven and we all followed in his footsteps. Sadly at the time, we were rejected by many of our friends and family due to our conversion.

Gareth: That must have been tough!

Eugene: It was, but our church became our new family, it was an Indian congregation and so many people had similar experiences to us.

Gareth: It was racially segregated?

Eugene: Yes, the whole of South African society was racially segregated, it was unavoidable. But you know I just visited my mum last month and her church is now completely racially integrated and that is increasingly a reflection of the wider society too. Additionally, most of my family and friends are now Christian!

Gareth: OK, so what about Catholicism and the UK?

Eugene: So my father died when I was 16 and the new pastor we had dealt with his death so badly that I walked away from the church. But I had friends at the local Catholic church so I started going there. I had never been at home in charismatic churches and I enjoyed the structure of the Catholic service; I knew what I was doing and everyone else was doing the same thing.

Gareth: OK so that's Catholicism, but how come the UK?

Eugene: Well I started work which included travelling abroad. My sister and brother were living in the UK at the time and whilst visiting her I met my wife to be. We got married and though we moved back to SA initially, because I was always travelling to Europe we decided to move to the UK and so that meant being based in Manchester and so eventually we settled on Wilmslow.

Gareth: OK, so that's UK/Wilmslow, what about St. John's?

Eugene: Well we had started attending a local Catholic church, but then in 2009 our children



started coming to Mums and Tots and the Holiday Club and then I started coming to some of the other events and sometimes attending Christmas and Easter services.

Gareth: But it's only really been in the last few years that you've become part of our church family right?

Eugene: Right and the change came about at the time of my divorce. Initially I had found St. John's to be almost too friendly but when my marriage broke down I found that these people listened, comforted and prayed with me, it was very significant for me. I then went on the Divorce Recovery Workshop with Kate which also helped a great deal.

Gareth: And so here you are! To finish off Eugene, the theme of our magazine this term is prayer, tell us a bit about your prayer life.

Eugene: Well, right from when my dad was converted, whilst congregational prayers were important praying 1 to 1 with God whenever wherever was encouraged in our home. When I was returning from my trip to South Africa last month, I was close to missing my flight and whilst I was focussing on the logistics of getting to the airport, my mum was most concerned with finding room to pray for me, that speaks volumes about the priority of prayer in her life. I still find it difficult to pray in a group if I don't know people well, but that's just a case of getting to know people and then it becomes natural.

Gareth: Thanks for sharing your story with us Eugene. Maybe some will want the long story now. They are welcome to hear it if they want, they only need ask.

MISSION PARTNERS ANSWERS TO PRAYER

Paul & Grace Robinson, Cambodia

Over the past few years my family and I have been working in Phnom Penh in Cambodia with OMF International. During this time, we have experienced many answers to prayer in our daily lives, and come to know the maxim 'God answers prayer' as an experienced reality. The following 3 stories will help to explain...

In January 2014, we returned to Cambodia after our home assignment in the UK and were quite lonely! We asked our supporters to pray with us for a pet: a cat to share our new home with us and help us transition back to Asia. God answered these prayers in a way which was more than we could ask or imagine. And after only 2 weeks of living in our new Cambodia home we had 4 cats and 1 dog and we felt compelled to ask people to stop praying for pets anymore!

God answers prayer...sometimes in ways that are more than we can ask or imagine. (Eph 3:20)

At the beginning of each day in Cambodia we always pray for God's protection on our travel; we drive small motorbikes to get around everywhere (just like the local folk) but traffic has considerably increased. In mid-2015, on the way to play some sport, Isobel, Sally & I (Paul) got knocked off our motorbike and had to go to A&E at the hospital. We were seriously hurt but it could have been a lot worse. The kids had injuries to their legs but not their heads and the injury to my neck could have been critical had it been deeper. God protected us through the accident and provided good medical care.

God answers prayer...even when we walk through valleys. (Psalm 23:4)

By the end of 2016 our house (with pets) truly had become a home and we wanted to continue to live there after our home assignment. So we prayed that God would prompt the landlord to allow us to continue living there after our return but at a slightly lower rent due in part that we were good



Paul, Grace, Isobel & Sally

tenants. We then asked the landlord! He thought about it and agreed that we were good tenants, so would only raise the rent by \$150 not \$200. This was a clear answer to prayer for us: in the future, this house would no longer be an option.

God answers prayer...sometimes with a 'no' because his grace is sufficient for us. (2 Cor 12:9)

One of the important threads of all these stories (as I'm sure that you would have many to add) is that we should be compelled to come daily, in dependence to God. Committing all our ways to him in that day and trusting that whatever the outcome, he is surely the best judge for our continued welfare and the best friend to walk beside us in whatever circumstance we face...

God answers prayer...so let us pray without ceasing in all our circumstances! (1Thes 5:17 & Rom 8:28)

Paul & Grace Robinson, with Isobel and Sally are on home assignment and will be visiting St John's on the 11th June.

BOOK REVIEW

Enjoy Your Prayer Life - Michael Reeves

Chris Piltz

This little book by Michael Reeves is both challenging and encouraging and gives some insightful thoughts about praying. Many books have been written over the years and have suggested ways of how, when and where to pray. In this book the author explores our relationship to God and how it can strengthen with a good prayer life. He quotes John Calvin, the 16th century theologian, as calling prayer "the chief exercise of faith".

The book explores how and when Jesus prayed. When full of joy, when agonising, when making important decisions, his prayers inspired his disciples to ask 'Lord, teach us to pray'. Prayer is enjoying and wanting the friendship and friendly assistance of God. We sometimes query why God does not answer our prayers right away - it is because he wants us to persevere in our prayers.

Prayer shouldn't be seen as something different from the rest of life as we have fellowship with God

at all times. We can all become distracted when praying and we are encouraged to focus on who we are coming before.

The book talks about our dependence on God and also the role of the Spirit and how the Spirit is 'the wind in the sails of our prayer and makes us Christ-like as we pray'.

Communal prayer is also discussed - it is the Christian life in a nutshell - the family of the Father coming together to him to share His concerns.

This book will be helpful for the mature Christian to re-look at and refresh their prayer life and for the newer Christian to help them grow and develop their prayer life and for all to enjoy the fellowship of God.



BOOK REVIEW

Prayer - Tim Keller

Duncan Howsley

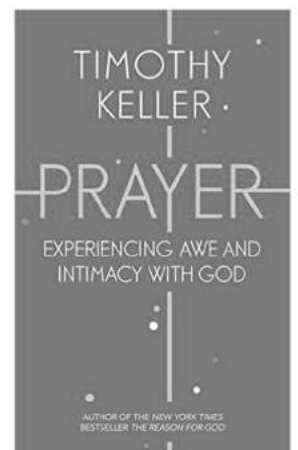
Christians often struggle with prayer, a reality that Keller acknowledges has been true of himself in the opening of this book. However, he also identifies prayer as the main way we experience deep change and the way we grow in our knowledge, understanding and love of God. As Keller puts it, not praying as a Christian is "a failure to treat God as God." It is, therefore, something that Christians should be getting stuck into - but how?

Prayer begins by looking at how and why we should pray - what prayer is, why prayer is important and how God wants us to pray, before looking at the writings of Luther, Calvin and others on prayer. Keller gives extremely helpful and practical examples to help us engage more fully with God in prayer, and even provides suggested templates for how to fit prayer into our daily lives.

This book provides an in depth and thoughtful look at the theology and practicality of doing prayer

better, as well as demonstrating how prayer is an essential part of maturing in our Christian lives and walk with God. I should add - this book isn't all rules and regulations: Keller reminds us that for all the guidelines, writings and examples about prayer, no amount of praying to a set of rules can make our prayers worthy to be heard - indeed, only grace can do that, based not on our performance but the saving work of Christ!

As Keller summarises, "Prayer is awe, intimacy, struggle - yet the way to reality. There is nothing more important, or harder, or richer, or more life-altering. There is absolutely nothing so great as prayer." This is an excellent and in-depth look at an essential part of our Christian lives.



Prayers of

We can learn how to pray from others - here are

*I thank thee more that all our joy is touched with
pain,
That shadows fall on brightest hours, that thorns
remain;
So that earth's bliss may be our guide, and not our
chain.*

*I thank thee, Lord, that here our souls, though
amply blessed,
Can never find, although they seek, a perfect rest;
Nor ever shall, until they lean on Jesus' breast.
Amen*

From 'My God, I thank thee, who hast made'
Adelaide Procter (1825-1864)

*Inspire and strengthen us by your Holy Spirit, O
Lord God, to seek your will and uphold your
honour in all things:*

*in the purity and joy of our homes,
in the trust and fellowship of our common life,
in daily service of the good,*

*after the pattern and in the power of your Son, our
Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
Amen.*

Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667)

*Grant that I may ever desire and will that which is
most pleasant and most acceptable to thee.*

*Thy will be my will, and my will be to follow
always thy will.*

*Let there be always in me one will, and one desire
with thee; and that I have no desire to will or not
to will, but as thou wilt.*

*Lord, thou knowest what thing is most profitable
and most expedient for me.*

*Give, therefore, what thou wilt, as much as thou
wilt, and when thou wilt.*

*Do with me what thou wilt, as it shall please thee,
and shall be most to thine honour.*

*Put me where thou wilt, and freely do with me in
all things after thy will.*

*Thy creature I am, and in thy hands, lead and
turn me where thou wilt.*

*Lo, I am thy servant, ready to do all things that
thou commandest; for I desire not to live to myself,
but to thee,
Amen.*

Catherine Parr, King Henry VIII's sixth wife

the Saints

Here are some prayers from God's people down the ages.

O most loving Father, weigh not my sins, but remember the most gentle promises.

Consider not my evil works, but have respect unto the undefiled deeds of thy Son Jesus Christ, whom thou hast given to be my Redeemer, my Saviour, my righteousness, my atonement-maker, my satisfaction, and the alone and all wholly sufficient sacrifice for my sins.

For his sake, for his innocence and righteousness, have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy, and put away all my unrighteousness for thy tender compassion.

I have gone astray like a sheep that was lost: Yet, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake, seek me up, lay me upon thy shoulders, and bring me home again to thy sheepfold, Amen.

Thomas Becon (1511-1567)

*O Lord, heavenly Father,
in whom is the fullness of light and wisdom,
enlighten our minds by the Holy Spirit,
and give us grace to receive thy word
with reverence and humility,
without which no man can understand thy truth,
for Christ's sake Amen.*

John Calvin (1509-1564)

O thou who in almighty power wast weak, and in perfect excellency wast lowly, grant unto us the same mind.

All that we have which is our own is naught; if we have any good in us it is wholly thy gift.

O Saviour, since thou, the Lord of heaven and earth,

didst humble thyself, grant unto us true humility, and make us like thyself; and then, of thine infinite goodness,

raise us to thine everlasting glory; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever,

Amen.

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer

Join us for our monthly Saturday morning prayer breakfasts - an informal and friendly meeting where we share croissants, coffee and get together to pray in small groups. There is no pressure to pray out loud!

Prayer is the powerhouse of the church, so come along to join in! We meet May 13th, June 10th, July 8th at 8.30am - 9.15am in the church rooms.

WHAT HELPS ME TO PRAY

We asked members of the St John's church family to tell us a little bit about their prayer lives and what helps them to pray in their day-to-day lives.

"I find reminding myself of all I have to be thankful for is helpful for me in my prayer life.

I also find praying while I'm out running a good time; there are so few distractions and somehow it helps me to focus on what really matters."

Peter Bunyard



"I find it useful to make a list of things I want to pray for. This way when I come to pray, I know I haven't missed anything out and it also keeps me focused, preventing my mind from wandering."

Alice Hutton

"We know that God's will is done through prayer and we know the times we've prayed and our prayers have been answered. Whatever the answer, it's the right one, because it's God's answer."

Pauline Wilman



"We find it helps to have a regular time for prayer; in our house this is when we are putting the boys to bed. It is also helpful to remember that God is always listening, so we can send 'text message' prayers at any time when things come to mind. As far as family prayers are concerned we are still at the 'divide and conquer' stage with bedtimes so it is generally a case of one parent and one boy praying together."

Gareth and Michelle Hesslegrave

"We find that reading God's word and setting aside time at the same time of day help us to pray. It also helps us to have a structure - so to make sure we start with praise and thanksgiving, rather than with our own needs."

Alison and Johnny Walsh



RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



Engage Science evenings

at Costa Coffee, Wilmslow



Church Weekend Away 2017



NEW FACES AT ST JOHN'S

We say hello to some of the newer members of the St. John's Church family

Craig, Tracy, Dominic, William and Oliver Aston

We are the Astons. We have lived in Wilmslow for 14 years. We are Craig, a golf loving company director, Tracy a singing maths teacher, our sportsman Dominic, the multi-talented William and Oliver our born performer. We've been at St John's on Sunday's for just over a year but we have been part of St John's for much longer, from mums and tots to Kids Club, Friday Night Live and holiday club. We love that we have friends here at St John's and look forward to making more.



Julie Brierley

My name is Julie Brierley, I moved to Wilmslow in August 2015 to start a new life. I have 2 children, Millie who is 12 and goes to Kings Girls and Kaylee who is 11 and goes to Nether Alderley Primary School. When my girls are at school I am a Beauty Therapist working from home. I do all aspects of beauty treatments and is hoping to build my business up. I am always willing to make new friends and extend my clientele.

THY KINGDOM COME 2017

In 2016 the Archbishops of Canterbury & York invited churches across England to join in a great wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost for the evangelisation of our nation. Here at St John's we took part with a special week of prayer, showing the Archbishop's video and issuing prayer bookmarks.

This year they have re-issued the invitation – a week of prayer for evangelism, in the run up to Pentecost (4th June). We are once again eager to take part in this national initiative – praying with other Christians across the country for the empowering of the Holy Spirit that we may be effective witnesses to Jesus Christ.

The annexe (at the back of the church rooms) will be open as a **Prayer Room each day, Monday 29th May – Saturday 3rd June, 8am to 8pm**, for people to come along whenever suits you. There

will be prayer information provided. **Each day will begin with an hour of group prayer, 8 - 9am**, with a nominated leader.

On Sunday 4th June, 5.30pm there is a service of praise, celebration, joy and intercession in Chester Cathedral as the whole diocese comes together to pray. This is to involve Stuart Townend, Steve Legg and Bishop Peter. Stuart Townend is one of the leading songwriters of our generation and will be known to many. Steve Legg is an evangelist who uses a unique blend of comedy, mystery and visual parables to communicate the Christian message.

For more information on Thy Kingdom Come 2017, please visit www.thykingdomcome.global where you can see updates and a video about the movement.

THEOLOGY CORNER

WHY AREN'T MY PRAYERS ALWAYS ANSWERED?

Simon Gales

'Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart'

Psalm 37:4

This verse is sometimes taken to mean if we make God our number one priority in life then he will give us all we want - that dream job, a happy family and so on. But the message of the verse is quite different. If we delight ourselves in the Lord what will that do to our dreams? It will transform them! As we delight ourselves in the Lord our thinking and wishes become like his. The desires of our hearts become **the desires of God** and he will surely give them to us, as this verse promises.

How do we know **the desires of God**? They are revealed for us in the Bible: we can look at the plans of God e.g. his purpose for each one of us is that we be conformed to the image of his Son. We can look at his many promises. When God makes a promise it's an expression of what he wants to give us. When our requests are in tune with **God's desires** we can pray confidently knowing that he will answer.

That leaves us with a question: What about all those matters where **we don't know what God desires**? Imagine your son has a speech impediment and is being picked on at school. You are worried about how he will cope and about the long term psychological effects the bullying might have. Obviously you pray for the speech impediment to be cured and the bullying to stop, but do we have any assurance that either of these things is God's will for your son at that time? There

is no Bible promise that Christians will be spared all problems in life, nor does God say that he will always prevent people being mean to others. What then do we pray? What confidence can we have that God will answer? The Bible says nothing about the specifics of what to pray for in this and many other situations. But it's not silent about what we should do with such anxieties: *'Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.'*

In such a situation how we pray will be driven by what we believe. As God's Word renovates our attitudes and beliefs it will change the way we pray. To return to our example, a transformed Christian mind will naturally and reasonably pray for the impediment to be cured and the bullying to stop, but it will also pray that the experience will strengthen your son's character and trust in God, knowing that the Bible tells us such things are produced in the furnace of difficulty and suffering. This side of heaven we will never know fully what God wants, and so what we should pray for in every situation. That is why the prayer of the Christian will always echo the prayer of Jesus *'Not my will, but yours, be done'*. Strangely some people are critical of this prayer. They say it exhibits a lack of faith; 'Christians shouldn't waste their breath on such cop-out prayers', but that view is mistaken. When we know what God's will is, we can, and should, pray confidently. But God's purposes aren't always clear! In those situations, the prayer of faith is the one which pours out its anxieties and entrusts the outcome to God's good and sovereign will.



FURTHER READING

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Tim Keller

Reviewed on page 5 of this issue of In Touch, *Prayer* is an excellent and in depth look at the theory behind the hows and whys of God wanting us to pray, as well as a very practical look at how we can get started with prayer and then develop and mature in our own prayer lives.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

Sundays

10am

Lord's Supper on third Sunday

6.30pm

Lord's Supper on first Sunday

Homegroups

Apr 23	Annual Meeting	
Apr 30	Prayer Unplugged Praying as children of God Matthew 6:5-15	Story of Joseph What a dreamer Genesis 37:1-36
May 7	Praying for God's glory Matthew 6:5-15	Is God at Work? Genesis 38:1-30
May 14	All-age parade service	Has God left the Stage? Genesis 39:1 - 40:23
May 21	Praying for God's provision Matthew 6:5-15	God is keeping his promise Genesis 41:1-57
May 28	Praying for God's pardon & protection Matthew 6:5-15	Reunion? Genesis 42:1-38
June 4	To Christians in Turmoil: Faith in a world of doubt 2 Peter 1:1-15	Repentance & Reconciliation Genesis 43:1 - 45:28
June 11	Paul & Grace Robinson with bring and share lunch	Paul & Grace Robinson
June 18	The Bible: fact, fiction or fantasy? 2 Peter 1:16-21	God behind the scenes Genesis 46:1 - 47:31
June 25	Adam Jones NW Team Leader, UCCF	Final Days Genesis 48:1 - 50:26
July 2	A Church Adrift 2 Peter 2:1-22	Danger! False Teachers at Work! Beware! Jude 1-4
July 9	Is Christ surely coming? 2 Peter 3:1-9	God's Verdict Jude 5-19
Jul 16	Living in the light of the coming 2 Peter 3:10-18	Stand Firm! Jude 20-25

Meeting in various homes, on Thursday and Fridays, afternoons and evenings, to study God's Word and to encourage one another.

NEHEMIAH: RENOVATOR'S DREAM

May 11th
The promise keeper
Nehemiah 1, 2

May 25th
God the builder
Nehemiah 2, 3

June 8th
Trouble & Strife
Nehemiah 4-6

June 22nd
Listen up!
Nehemiah 7-12

July 6th
All fall down!
Nehemiah 13

Dates are given for Thursdays. In addition, a women's Bible study meets at 9.45am on Wednesdays and a men's Bible study meets at 6.30am on Fridays.

Monthly prayer breakfasts:

May 13th, June 10th and July 8th. Saturday mornings, 8.30-9.45am, in the Church Rooms. Drop by for prayer, coffee and croissants.

Special Events

May 6	Northern Men's Convention St Andrew's Leyland, 10am - 4.45pm	May 29- June 3	'Thy Kingdom Come' Prayer
May 7	Simply Lunch A home near you!	June 2/3	Big Church Day Out Capesthorpe Hall
May 13	Who Let The Dads Out? Church Rooms, 10-11.30am	June 13	Sports Quiz Alderley Edge Golf Club, 7.30pm
May 15	Christian Roots of Environmental Concern Venue TBC, 7.30pm	June 17	Equipped! 'Woman to Woman' St Andrews, Preston
May 20	Men's Breakfast Alderley Edge Golf Club, 8.15am	July 2	Evergreens Lunch Church Rooms, 12.15pm
May 21	Evergreens Lunch Church Rooms, 12.15pm	July 13	Christian Institute roadshow Church Rooms