

LOVING ONE ANOTHER, OUR FRIDAY PRAYER THEME FOR FEBRUARY – reflection from Emma Crick de Boom, Diocesan Reconciliation Enabler

Being a reconciling presence in the heart of our communities.



It has been a blessing to work with people in our Diocese, and the Midlands more widely, that are reflecting on and practicing being a reconciling presence, through *who* they are and *how* they are. You may know that as part of my role I work closely with the key learning from Difference (a five session course, see [here](#)), and particularly the ‘three reconciling habits’, *be curious, be present, reimagine*. When people (individually or in groups) are actively thinking and praying, *who* and *how* they are in their different contexts, may that be in work or Church, in *all* different kinds of relationships. It has a direct impact in their interactions with people, may that be with other individuals or groups or even how they care for creation.

Some examples from the last six months:

- I got to see how a PCC was considering their leadership position in their parish and community by looking and acting through the lens of the three habits. How do we serve and minister by practicing the habits, modelling a reconciling presence to each other and our wider community?
- In curates training, how as leaders they can practise the habits, increasing the reality of a reconciling presence, and asking, how they might create space for their community members to come alongside them? In return how they might learn from their community members and support them.
- Hear how people working with children’s groups inside and outside of schools, reflecting on their presence through practicing the habits, so they can continue the good and hard work of having increasingly active inclusive groups in a multi-diverse reality of different needs and cultural intersections. As well as have good working relationships with colleagues and volunteers by practicing the habits.
- Hearing Difference course participants in the Midlands and nationally say things like:
 - o *‘I feel closer to Jesus’*
 - o *‘I am more inclined to try to see the other person's viewpoint and be interested in why they hold it.’*
 - o *‘I feel that we are called to look beyond those differences and re-learn how to be deeply curious, even about people whose perspectives we may find offensive or hurtful – to reimagine the nature of conversations, of relationships, of community, and to be deeply present to one another, even to those we differ hugely from.*
 - o *‘We were inspired to hear about one recent participant of the Difference course in prison who described how the habit of being present had enabled them to build a positive relationship with a prison officer.’*

“Reconciliation is not the ending of all difference, but the transformation of how we deal with difference.” Archbishop Justin Welby

‘By “reconciliation” Justin Welby means **the transformation of damaging conflict into healthy disagreement**. He sees it as peace-making and describes reconcilers as facilitators. Like many who have done the hard yards in this zone, he is not sentimental about outcomes that disagreements will cease; and it is for that very reason that we need to learn how to relate well to those with whom we disagree.’ *The Revd Dr Stephen Cherry is the Dean of King’s College, Cambridge.*

Background [‘Reconciliation Enabler’ post announced - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](#)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Southam Deanery AD Andy Batchelor	2 CANDLEMAS Bishop's Core Staff Team (day); Diocesan Environment Group	3 Loving One Another	4 The Bridges Group C Gillian Roberts
5 St Lawrence' CofE Primary School, Napton- on-the-Hill	6 General Synod (6-9 February) + Christopher and our Synod members	7 Diocesan Trustees	8 Coventry Cathedral – second gathering of <i>Wonder</i>	9 Being Healthy Church (a new CMD session)	10 Loving One Another	11 Bishop's Itchington & Radford Semele C Martin Green
12 Radford Semele Primary School	13 Diocesan Staff, especially Jenny Irvine and Andy Waddams	14 Clergy Wellbeing	15 Net Zero objective in the Diocese	16 The Offchurch Group C Hugh Priestner	17 Loving One Another	18 Harbury, Ladbroke & Ufton C Andy Batchelor
19 Harbury CofE Primary School	20 Bishop's Council	21 Cathedral Chapter	22 ASH WEDNESDAY Southam C Vikki Bisiker	23 St James's CofE Primary School, Southam	24 Loving One Another	25 Long Itchington & Marton C Richard Suffern
26 1 ST SUNDAY OF LENT Mission Hub Associate Ministers	27 Bishop's Core Staff Team (on residential)	28 Long Itchington CofE Primary School				AD = Area Dean C = Clergy

PRAYER DIARY

WALKING ALONGSIDE ONE ANOTHER*
Who are you 'walking alongside'?
Who will you be praying for this
month? Family, friends, church
family, those harder to love?
*home from Southam Deanery Plan

DIFFERENCE
+ **Be Curious** – listen to others' stories and
see how the world looks through their eyes
+ **Be Present** – encounter others with
authenticity and confidence
+ **Reimagine** – find hope and opportunity in
the places where we long to see change

BEING HEALTHY CHURCH

Loving Relationships
'Peace is something we are called to *be*,
not simply to *do*'

Difference course creator

SPECIFIC DAYS IN FEBRUARY 2023

1 - Two of the threads of the Southam Deanery Plan are the parishes continuing to work together and support each other in reaching our parishes with the Good News. The other thread is *how we walk alongside each other pastorally and in discipleship* we hope that gives you a flavour of Southam Deanery.


1 – Pray for Southam Town Council. The Southam Neighbourhood Plan was initiated in 2016. It is a statement by the .. as to their wishes for land use, the built, and the natural environments in their area. It helps inform local planning decisions and infrastructure projects, and gains its power from the fact the community has voted for it in a special referendum and therefore it reflects a democratic view. *Southam will be a desirable place to live, being a sustainable rural community where people feel happy to live and work safely with plentiful opportunities for sport and recreation. The environment, community services, economic growth, cultural development and infrastructure of the neighbourhood will be protected and enhanced for future generations.* Background [Southam Neighbourhood Plan – Southam Town Council \(southamcouncil-warks.gov.uk\)](https://southamcouncil-warks.gov.uk).

4 - For the Bridges Group - we give thanks for the continued commitment to work together as a team across the Group and also for the local initiatives to build relationships within our communities. We pray for the future plans and priorities for our Group in this coming year. R – Peter Jackson.

5 - For St. Lawrence's School - we give thanks for the growing experiences of the church, school and community working together.

6 - Bishop Christopher would value prayer for the [Church of England] General Synod which will be meeting from 6 – 9 February inclusive.

11 - Bishops Itchington .. giving thanks for St Michael's and the church's ministry to its community and wider through foodbank and warm hub , and praying for new opportunities to spread Gods kingdom through the new housing estates.

11 & 12 - Radford Semele .. giving thanks for faithful few who continue to serve, and the church school and the creative relationships there, and praying for growth at St Nics with breakfast church, teatime church and warm hub opportunities. Background [Check out this CD from 2022 "The Hope of Spring"](#)  [Martin Green \(bandcamp.com\)](https://www.bandcamp.com/artist/martin-green).

16 - The Offchurch Group: comprising St Gregory's; St John's; St Margaret's and St Michael's. Our Mission Statement: *One Church fellowship receiving and sharing God's gifts in Christ across our five villages.* We give thanks for developing partnerships and pray for insight and understanding in our reaching out in love. R – Richard Spicer.

18 - Could we ask for prayer for the beginning of a new Outreach initiative 'The Collective' at the Shakespeare pub, and that the building work in Harbury church completes on time and to budget.

18 - In Ladbroke could we ask for prayer as we work with a number of local schools who come to take part in a variety of activities in conjunction with the 'All Saints 4 All Generations' project.

19 - Give thanks for the appointment of a new Head (Lucy Boswell) at Harbury school, and a revitalised relationship with the church community. For Open the Book who do such valuable and appreciated work.

22 - For Southam St James, giving thanks for God's provision in the new life emerging in St James, the opportunities for mission and for being alongside those who are hurting.

23 - For St James Academy, giving thanks for the opportunities of the church, the community and the school to work together to share and receive God's love. Thank God for the provision of the Open the Book team.

25 - Holy Trinity Long Itchington and Marton. We praise God for that people are feeling confident to return to in person worship services and for new attendees. Prayers would be appreciated as we seek to clarify vision for the Benefice and to be good stewards of what the Lord has graciously given us. New opportunities are opening up with the Church School. We are seeking an opportune time and place to start Alpha and Youth Alpha. Prayers for the leadership including Wardens Sue, Janet and Jenny and the PCCs. R – Terry Morris.

26 – Mission Hub Associate Ministers - Eleanor Jeans, Abby Rhodes, Daniel Corlett and Erin Gilmour. Ongoing recruiting to other AM vacancies, too.

Background [Meet the Mission Hub Associate Ministers - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org)

PRAYER JOTTINGS – FEBRUARY 2023

- I have challenged myself to read Tyler Staton's '**Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools – and invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer**' (Hodder & Stoughton, 2022) this year, having seen it recommended by worship leader Jonathan Helser. Tyler is the national director of the 24-7 prayer movement in the United States. He encourages us, '*pray as you can*',
 - *Practice. Start where you are. Talk to God. Talk to him about the little details of you're sure he doesn't care about. Talk to him about the ways he has let you down or disappointed you. Talk to him about the blessings heaped on you that you could never deserve. Talk to him about the anxiety you're carrying today. Just talk to him. Prayer is not the memorizing of facts or highlighting of key phrases; it's a relational discovery* (page 29).
- I found myself joining St Mark's, Coventry, for parts of their 3-day programme of **Prayer and Fasting (10-12 January)**. Psalm 63 was a focal point on the first day, as we considered how to deepen our relationship with God; on Day 3 we were praying in earnest for the flourishing of charities and church plants associated with the church. A super booklet encompassed the programme, offering practical guidance on prayer and fasting. I have a PDF version.
- The theme this month is **Loving One Another**, and leads us to focus on differences with others. Have you come across [Peace Pursuit](#); a practical resource for addressing conflict you may have yourself, or see between others? Rowan Williams quotes Donald Nicholl (*The Testing of Hearts: A Pilgrim's Journal, 1989*) in his book **The Way of Benedict** (2020) .. "*Peace work demands a far higher degree of self-discipline, spiritual preparation and self-knowledge than we are generally prepared to face*".
- *Coming up – the Themes for the next 3 months are Lent & Easter (March) with a focus on Passionate Spirituality, Renewing the Environment (April), then Thy Kingdom Come (May). Do consider sending me your prayer suggestions, and any other jottings.*
- Each month we focus on a different Deanery; this month it is **Southam**. The district has a population in excess of 6,000. Known for technology business, Vivarail (rolling stock) production, with a

single secondary school – Southam College. There are ten councilors across four wards, and it is part of Stratford District Council and Warwickshire County Council.



- *In March that will be praying for Fosse Deanery, in April Coventry South & Kenilworth, then Rugby in May. I look forward to receiving updates from area deans and clergy, and anyone else with specific prayer requests.*
- **Wonder** (see 8th February) is a new worshipping community led by Revd Mary Gregory, Canon for Arts and Reconciliation at the Cathedral. The first gathering was based on a piece of art in the Cathedral, and led us to reflect on Thresholds in our lives. Points where we might be fearful, places also of opportunity and change. A more reflective space for prayer, to listen and appreciate art works in our Cathedral.
- Have you heard about **Alive 23**? It is a massive free praise party and celebration for Key Stage 2 children, school staff, clergy and governors on 15 & 16 June 2023. Each school is being invited to the National Agricultural & Exhibition Centre, Stoneleigh, with each of four sessions preceded by a picnic. Coventry Diocesan Board of Education is partnering with Imagine Ministries and Feed the Hungry for this visionary event. The aim is 3,000 people joining worship at each of the four sessions. Please pray for volunteers to help steward, connections for parishes where there is no CofE school. The preparations in schools have already begun. Let's pray across the coming days, weeks and months, for this significant initiative.
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