



“Watch and Pray challenges us to seek God in both familiar and unfamiliar places: in darkness and in quiet; in movement and migration; in the healing and transforming work of the Spirit; in the weeping of Holy Week and in the joy of Easter morning.” *Archbishops Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell*

This Lent we are encouraged to wait expectantly for God to meet us and sustain us through the storms and trials we all face.

The Church of England’s Lent theme for 2024 is **Watch and Pray: Wisdom and hope for Lent and life.**

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus kneels in darkness in the Garden of Gethsemane. Though he pleads with his disciples, “Stay here with me ... Watch and pray,” they all fall asleep, leaving him alone in his hour of deepest suffering.

This Lent all of us are encouraged to draw on the wisdom of Black Spirituality, particularly the practice of “tarrying” (waiting) as a community to draw closer to Jesus and to each other. Combining exuberant singing, fervent prayer and quiet lament, such services typically take place at night and last somewhat longer than the “one hour” Jesus asked of those first followers.

This year’s resources have been inspired and informed by the 2024 Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent book, Tarry Awhile: Wisdom from Black Spirituality for people of faith by Selina Stone (SPCK). The daily reflections booklet for adults (CHP) exploring the same themes has been written by Carlton Turner, and there is also a daily challenge booklet for children and families (CHP).

**Watch and Pray** invites us to seek God in both familiar and unfamiliar places this Lent: in darkness and in quiet; in movement and migration; in the healing and transforming work of the Spirit; in the weeping of Holy Week and in the joy of Easter morning.

**Watch and Pray - Resources for Lent 2024 | The Church of England**

**1 Corinthians 16:13** Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. **1 Thessalonians 5:6** So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded.

**Matthew 24:42** Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day on which your Lord will come.

**Matthew 26:41** Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

**RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY (11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2024)**

“Racial prejudice plays a dominant role in the hostile approach to refugees. Racism is at the root of the ‘hostile environment’ that is promoted as an official policy in our country. Therefore, on Racial Justice Sunday this year, it is appropriate that we focus on the justice dimension of our hospitality to those who are fleeing persecution. The affirmation that every human being carries the image of God regardless of their race, colour or geographical location is foundational to our Christian understanding of humanity. It is a tragic effect of our sin that a huge number among us live in poverty and conflict – which compels them to look for places of safety and security elsewhere – while many of us live in comfort and relative peace. Offering hospitality to the most vulnerable among us is part of reparation as we repent of our corporate sin.”

**The Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, Bishop of Liverpool, Chair, Churches’ Refugee Network**

[from EXODUS - the CTBI resource pack for 2024]

AD = Area Dean; C = Clergy; Assoc = Associate; Cur: Curate; HT = Headteacher; HoS = Head of School; EH = Executive Head; All schools CofE;

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Lent is a wilderness experience and at no other time can it feel more like that than a stay in hospital. Please pray for chaplaincy that they may journey with those in darkness and pain & bring a sense of light.			<b>HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS</b> Liz Jones, Simon Mould and Jonathan Fryer	<i>NUNEATON DEANERY</i> 1  AD – Dave Poultney Lay Chair – David Spiers	2  Ansley & Arley Benefice C: Steve Pedley (Assoc)	3  Horeston Grange LEP
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY</b> 4 <b>BEFORE LENT</b> Atherstone C: Michael Brandsma; R: John Stock	5  Attleborough C: Alison Evans  <i>Bishop's Council meet</i>	6  Bedworth Team: All Saints/Camp Hill and Bedworth Mission Hub C: Dave Poultney	7  All Saints Primary HoS: Kerry O'Grady EH: Chris Errington <i>Archdeacons and ADs</i>	8  St Michael's Primary H: Chris Errington <i>Bishop's Strategy Integration Group and Core Staff meet</i>	9  The Canons Primary School H: Michaela Fallon	10  Hartshill & Galley Common C: Heather Barnes; Cur: Stacy Nelson; R: Nick Miles, Sally Young
<b>RACIAL JUSTICE 11 SUNDAY</b> Bulkington, Burton Hastings C: Charles Higgins; Assoc: Emma Higgins; Cur: Rob Griffiths	12  St James Junior Academy H: Jane Cook	13  Chilvers Coton w Astley C (Assoc): Rupert Allen, Jonathan Fryer; R: Peter Wrigley	<b>ASH WEDNESDAY 14</b>  All Saints, Nuneaton Primary & Nursery H: Lisa Harrison <i>Net Zero Steering Grp</i>	15  St Giles, Exhall C: Gail Phillip; R(PTO): John Owen; R: Chris Wilson	<b>16</b>  <b>"Watch ... be brave, be strong"</b>	17  Fillongley & Corley C: Steve Pedley (Assoc); Cur: Jo Parker
<b>1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 18</b>  Bournebrook Primary H: Nicola Smith	19  Wolvey, Copston Magna & Withybrook C: Jonny Vaughan; R(PTO) David Hopkins	20  Wolvey Primary HoS: Matthew Parker EH: Andrew Edwards	21  Mancetter C: Linda Mudd <i>Cathedral Finance Cttee</i>	22  St Mary the Virgin, Nuneaton C: Fr Roger Butcher	<b>23</b>  <b>"Stay alert and be clear headed"</b> <b>General Synod starts</b>	24  Abbey Infant: H: Rachel Horton; Queen's Junior: H: Hannah Carvell <b>General Synod day 2</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 25</b>  St Nicolas, Nuneaton C: Chris Routledge; Assoc: Adrian Guthrie; R (PTO) John Hitchcock, Terry Lenton	26  St Nicolas (VA) Primary H: Sharon Thorpe  <b>General Synod day 4</b>	27  <i>Cathedral Chapter</i>  <b>General Synod concludes</b>	28  St Paul's, Stockingford C: Kate Massey; R: Emma Kennedy	29  St Paul's Primary H: Lindsay Eardley <i>Diocesan Environment Group</i>	<b>Remainder of LENT</b>  <i>The season of Lent continues to the beginning of Holy Week with</i>	<b>HOLY WEEK</b>  <i>Palm Sunday is 24<sup>th</sup> March. Maundy Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> March. Good Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> March. Easter Day, 1<sup>st</sup> April.</i>

# PRAYER DIARY

**We saw a stranger yesterday.**  
**We put food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place,**  
**Music in the listening place.**  
**And,**  
**With the sacred name of the triune God,**  
**They blessed us and our house, our cattle and our dear ones.**  
**As the lark says in her song:**  
**Often, often, often goes Christ in the stranger's guise.**  
*A Celtic Prayer Adaptation by Phill Mellstrom (CTBI Exodus, Racial Justice Sunday, 2024)*

**EXODUS: GOD'S JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE ON THE MOVE**  
**Hosea 12:6** - But as for you, return to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.  
**Romans 12:21** - Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.  
**Proverbs 22:2** - The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.

## SPECIFIC DAYS IN FEBRUARY 2024

**1 - Nuneaton Deanery** Pray for our community schools, nurseries and North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire college; for the farmers and rural communities; for the 30<sup>th</sup> Signal Regiment based at Bramcote Barracks.

**2 – Ansley** “Thank God for provision in recent years in both Ansley Village and Ansley Common. We want to give thanks for the support of the Mission and Ministry Partnership Team after what has seemed like a long vacancy. Prayers for the challenge of ministry in a changing environment.” **Arley** “Thanks for the partnership working with external charities supporting a community with significant financial challenges. That we can fully utilize the building at New Arley to resource mission.”

**5 – Holy Trinity, Attleborough** “Family Fun After School Club - we thank God for the families who have started coming since this started in September and the sense of community being built. Please pray that it continues to grow and all ages begin to get to know Jesus.”

**6 - All Saints, Bedworth** – Our New Youth team started in January - 3 of them - Josh, Mary & Rafa - Pray for them as they launch their new program of Youth outreach (Called 'Youth Impact') every Monday 6-8pm, and as they begin to deepen our engagement in the local schools. C: Anne Poultney; Assoc: Paul Foster; Cur: Tris Peattie; Matt Bull, Dee Badland;; R (PTO): Kathleen Farmer; R: Ruth Ison  
**Bedworth Mission Hub** Assoc: Ugo Okeke; Sp Cand: Dave Jones Our New Hub Associate, Rev Ugochukwu Okeke and his wife Ijeoma and their 3 sons David, Ebenezer and Joel joined us in January. Praying for grace as they work out housing, schooling, transport and new family life. Also praying for fruitfulness in Ugo's work with fresh expressions and New Worshipping Communities.

**10 – Holy Trinity, Hartshill & St Peter, Galley Common** “We thank God for a new evening fellowship group and a new bereavement group both recently started. Please pray that these groups will flourish and grow both in support for and fellowship with one another.

**15 – St Giles, Exhall** - “To give thanks for: a deepening of faith amongst children and their families through our all age worship and the 'Being With' course. To pray for: Effective next steps following a recent Vision Day with the theme of Re-wilding”

**17 – Fillongley** “Thanks for the amazing response to the outreach events during the latter part of 2023 and the amount of community engagement. Prayer – that we continue the momentum of this engagement and that we are ready to introduce Christ Jesus.” **Corley** – “Thanks for numerical growth of the congregation as we recover from the effect of the pandemic. Prayer – that we can restructure well after the retirement of a well-loved and mainstay member of the leadership team.”

**18 – Bournebrook Primary School** – “We would like to say thank you for our parents' attending sessions in school and embracing learning opportunities. We would like to pray for the Fillongley community, in particular the farmers, with the changing weather.”

**21 – St Peter's, Mancetter** - We thank God for: the growth of church family both spiritually and numerically and for the commitment of so many to service both Christ and Community. We pray for: guidance and discernment in our outreach to families and for wisdom in prioritising urgent repair works within the church.

**27 – St Paul's, Stockingford** – “Please pray for us as we celebrate our bicentenary year. May our celebrations glorify God, celebrate God's goodness and invite new people into the adventure of following Jesus.”

### Praying for the discerning process for a new Bishop of Coventry

[Vacancy in See - details of process](#) Statement of Needs was published on 15 January.

#### A prayer created by the Vacancy in See Committee

Heavenly Father,  
As we seek to appoint a new Bishop,  
we pray you would inspire us as we work together.  
Help us to be attentive to your promptings during this time of discernment  
and by your Holy Spirit lead us on a sure path <sup>a</sup>  
for we are your servants seeking your divine wisdom.  
Help us humbly to see as you see, to lay aside our preconceptions  
and be open to your plans.  
Just as you guided the prophet Samuel <sup>b</sup>  
to see more than was apparent in the natural  
help us too with divine guidance throughout this time of discernment.  
Lead us as we pray for your kingdom to come here in our diocese  
and for Jesus' name to be honoured.  
May grace and reconciliation underlie all we do for our part in this process.  
Give us boldness as you draw us to a collective mind for your glory.  
Amen

<sup>a</sup> Psalm 143, <sup>b</sup> 1 Samuel 16

**2024 - PRAYING FOR OUR MISSION DESIGN** - A number of theological themes guide and shape our shared work in mission. These help us realise our vision inspired by Jesus' promise of abundant life in **John 10:10**, and our vision of Restored Health, New Growth and Renewed Relationships. This month we continue to pray for 'our vision for Health Churches.'

**Our vision for Healthy Churches.** The Body of Christ, reconciled relationships with one another and with God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. **John 10:10, John 15, 2 Corinthians 5.18)**

**Spend time reading and reflecting on each verse – allow them to inform your prayer for your own life of Christian service and mission, and for your local church and local community this month.**

## PRAYER JOTTINGS – FEBRUARY 2024

- The second selections from Mark Oakley's *'The Collage of God'* (Canterbury, 2012) and Chris Webb's *'God Soaked Life – discovering a kingdom spirituality'* (Hodder, 2017).
  - In the section entitled **'The Invitation'** (pp. 7-27) Chris Webb invites us 'to participate in God's community of love.' In God's purpose 'This world was to be both a place drenched in God's holy presence and a dwelling for human beings living in relationship with him and with one another. Creation, a space opened up in which we could live and flourish, was God's great act of hospitality. (Genesis 1.27). His focus is 'the formation of a magnificent, all-encompassing God-soaked loving community.... It is his sole focus, his passion, his obsession.' .... He calls you .... Jesus never proclaimed the kingdom as a new religion ... nor was it a new religious institution ...[and] it was not a new political entity. The kingdom is formed by the God of love and community, and is intended for the least, the lost, the poor and the small. God made us for himself, and his heart is restless until it finds its rest in us. God delights in each of us – hard as that may be for some of us to believe. The life he offers 'is a life of purpose and significance and beauty. It is also a life of hardship, endeavor, suffering and tears. Will you accept his invitation or not?'

### **Reflect on Proverbs 8.22-31 – why might God delight in the human race?**

- Mark Oakley speaks (Ch1, Hiddenness) with deep respect and affection for the late television dramatist, Dennis Potter. He reflects that belief in God 'comes out of an intuition, a sense of awe, surprise, beyondness, epiphany. It emerges from the perception that reality can somehow, ultimately, be trusted. He quotes A.S. Byatt who sees a division between 'those who are interested in the world ... and those who merely subsist, worrying or yawning.'
- The mystery of God's hiddenness, though often interpreted as such, is not closure and self-concealment but a persistent revealing of God's self for the nurture of those he loves. Ultimately it is the shadowing of God that draws us to the light, inspiring our ache to be within his Kingdom.'

**Both speak of the offer from God, both infer in different ways how we might respond. Surely this is at the heart of a life soaked with prayer.**

**Nuneaton based chaplains** working with NHS Trusts include Jonathan Fryer, Liz Jones and Simon Moulton. Many people in hospital can feel isolated, fearful and unsure of what the future holds. Hospital chaplains in Coventry and Warwickshire journey alongside those in pain (physical & mental) and would be pleased to hear of any patients who would appreciate pastoral care.

Hospital chaplains - Diocese of Coventry



Fifteen copies of the small booklet **'Try Praying'** have been left in the foyer of the Diocesan Offices for the start of 2024 – please pick one up if you are passing by or visiting someone there. If not for yourself, to pass on to someone you hope could benefit from pausing to pray. [Trypraying.org](http://Trypraying.org)

**VACANCY IN SEE PROCESS.** Please continue to pray for:

- The Crown Nomination Commission
- The Electoral College, with members of the Diocese and General Synod nominated early in 2024 – 6 from our Diocese were elected on 15 January
- The Process towards Final Approval in the Autumn of 2024
- Bishop Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton, currently serving as the Acting Bishop of Coventry and Bishop Saju Muthalaly, Bishop of Loughborough, who provides part-time support
- A successful final Vacancy in See committee meeting The Statement of Needs.

- The prayer theme this month is **Lent**. *Coming up – the Themes for the next 3 months are Coventry Cathedral (March), Net Zero (Environmental Renewal and Creation Care) (April) and New Worshipping Communities (May).* Do consider sending me your prayer suggestions, and any other jottings.
- Each month **we focus on a different Deanery**; in February we are praying for **Nuneaton Deanery**, March will be Southam, Rugby in April, then Alcester Deanery in May. I look forward to receiving updates from area deans and clergy, and anyone else with specific prayer requests.

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