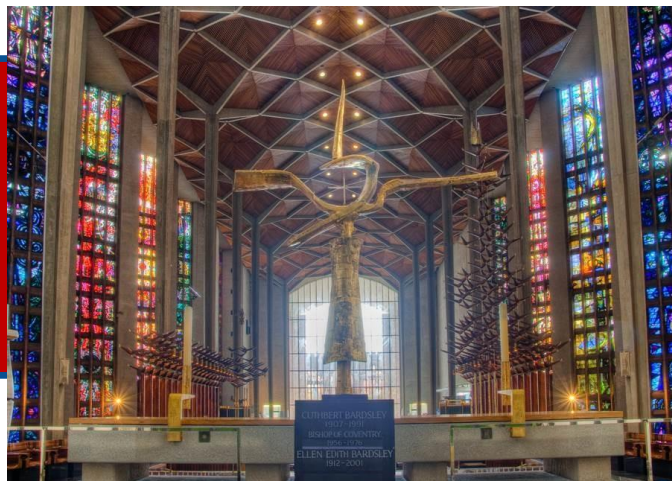


## HOLY WEEK & EASTER / COVENTRY CATHEDRAL, OUR FRIDAY PRAYER THEME FOR MARCH

The Very Revd. John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry, writes

***“This month carries us through the later days of Lent into Holy Week itself, culminating on Easter Day.*** As we journey with Jesus and each other, we are invited to walk in his footsteps. Where will that take you this year? The Cathedral embodies in its art and architecture the heart of the gospel. To walk from the ruins into the new Cathedral is to make the journey from all that is wrong with the world, and our lives, towards the transformation that only God can bring through Jesus Christ. Each time we do it, it brings the history of this heart of our Diocese alive.

Provost Dick Howard, on the night of Thursday November 14<sup>th</sup> 1940, looked at his beloved Cathedral and wrote in words that could mirror those looking at the ruins of Gaza or Ukraine: “As I watched the Cathedral burning, it seemed to me as though I were watching the crucifixion of Jesus upon His Cross.” Yet, as he clambered into the smoldering ruins the next morning, with this in his mind, he was able to say, “there flashed into my mind the deep certainty that as the Cathedral had been crucified with Christ, so it would rise again with Him.” [RT Howard, *Ruined and Rebuilt*, 1962] In this Diocese we take our cue from the Cathedral, being ready to walk in our prayers through the brokenness of our lives and our world, knowing that we walk with Jesus. In our prayers this month, we look for those places of brokenness, knowing that we will find Jesus there. In the Cathedral, like many parishes, we will follow the narrative of Holy Week from Palm Sunday through our evening services of Compline with addresses, and then the Chrism Eucharist on Maundy Thursday with the reaffirmation of ordination vows, and later the modelling of Christ’s ministry in a service of foot washing. On Good Friday Bishop Ruth will again be with us for the Service around the cross – helping us connect with the depth of Jesus’ suffering as he joined the suffering of the world. On Easter Day we meet as day breaks in the ruins, once a place of destruction but now of resurrection. Having dared to journey with Jesus through the hard places, we allow him to carry us to a place of joy and new life.”



The Cathedral's excellent website gives a wide range of information including the programme of services and special events in March.

[Coventry Cathedral](https://www.coventrycathedral.org/)

Pray for the Cathedral Chapter who will be meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

AD = Area Dean; C = Clergy; H = Headteacher; EH – Executive Head; HoS = Head of School

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					Southam Deanery AD Andy Batchelor	The Bridges Group C IN VACANCY
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 3</b> St Lawrence' CofE Primary School, Napton- on-the-Hill	4 Bishop's Itchington & Radford Semele C Martin Green	5 Radford Semele Primary School	6 <i>Diocesan Advisory Cttee SDF Annual Review</i>	7 <i>Bishop's Strategy Integration Group and Staff Team</i>	8 <b>Coventry Cathedral</b> <b>For its welcome, and place at the heart of the Diocese</b>	9 <b>Diocesan Synod</b>
<b>MOTHERING SUNDAY 10</b> <i>Giving thanks to God the Father (Col 3.17)</i>	11 <i>Mission Hub Associate Ministers, especially those newly in post</i>	12 The Offchurch Group C IN VACANCY	13 Long Itchington & Marton C Richard Suffern	14 Long Itchington CofE Primary School	15 <b>Coventry Cathedral</b> <b>Hospitality, the Cross of Nails community, wider role in reconciliation</b>	16 Harbury, Ladbroke & Ufton C Andy Batchelor
<b>5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 17</b> Harbury CofE Primary School	18 Southam C Vikki Bisiker	19 St James's CofE Primary School, Southam	20 <i>DBE Board Cathedral Finance Cttee</i>	21 <i>Bishop's Core Staff Team Glebe Committee</i>	22 <b>Coventry Cathedral</b> <b>The Arts, Diocesan engagement and synergy, serving the city</b>	23 For all leading services & preparing reflections for Holy Week
<b>PALM SUNDAY 24</b> Mark 11; John 11.53-57 'He won't come to Passover will he?'	<b>Start of Holy Week 25</b> John 12.1-11 'they flocked to see him'	26 John 12.20-36 Some Greeks said, 'Sir, we want to meet Jesus'	27 John 13.21-32 Jesus was deeply troubled. 'One of you will betray me.'	<b>MAUNDY THURSDAY 28</b> John 13.1-17 Jesus said 'do you understand what I was doing?'	<b>GOOD FRIDAY 29</b> John 18.1 and 19 Jesus knew that his mission was now finished	<b>EASTER EVE 30</b> John 19.38-42 Since the tomb was close at hand, they laid him there

# PRAYER DIARY

## 31<sup>st</sup> March EASTER DAY

'Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed – for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead....  
'Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them: "I have seen the Lord,"

**John 20.1-18**

"there flashed into my mind the deep certainty that as the Cathedral had been crucified with Christ, so it would rise again with Him." R.T. Howard

## BEING HEALTHY CHURCH - Scars

"The scars we bear are not cause for shame, nor must they define us in our entirety. They remind us of the work of God which continues to be needed in the world and in each of us, as we tarry ever more for the reign of God to be made known among us in justice and peace" Selina Stone (2023) 'Tarry Awhile- +ABC's Lent Book 2024.

## SPECIFIC DAYS IN MARCH 2024

**1** - Two of the threads of the **Southam Deanery Plan** are the parishes continuing to work together and support each other in reaching their parishes with the Good News. The other thread is *how they walk alongside each other pastorally and in discipleship* ....

**2 - For the Bridges Group** - All the Churches have seen a record number of people at their Christmas services: whole school end-of-term services, Carol services and Midnight Holy Communion. Villages have worked hard to engage with the schools and involve children in the life of the Church including Christmas books and Messy Church bags. The toddler groups in Napton & Stockton are going well. Some new initiatives are helping to reach out to our communities: Coffee & chat in Priors Marston Village Hall and an informal Sunday afternoon service in Priors Marston for prayer and unwrapping scripture. Priors Hardwick is planning an *Easter Carol service* on 7th April. 'Without Easter, there would be no Christmas and without Christmas, there would be no Easter'. There were 150 at their Christmas Carol service. During the vacancy Churches are working together, sharing priests when possible and supporting each other's services. Prayerful expectancy for a new incumbent. Church members endeavour to be accessible & approachable within their local communities. Stockton Church hosted a pancake party for families which was full of children and their carers! R (PTO) – Peter Jackson.

**4 - Bishops Itchington & Radford Semele** both churches continue with new people which is exciting, though balanced by some moving or passing away. Breakfast church at Radford is going well and we had a very encouraging Christmas in both villages. There's a new Alpha group starting in bishops this month, so do please pray for new steps of faith. Work in schools is also going well. Struggles are coloured at the moment with what's going on nationally; we try to encourage and build faith in Jesus.

**11 – Mission Hub Associate Ministers** Eleanor Jeans (St Paul's, Leamington Spa), Daniel Corlett (Alcester Minster), Erin Gilmour (The Bridge, Coventry), Ugo Okeke & Dave Jones (All Saints, Bedworth), Alison Baxter (St Andrew, Rugby) and Kate Pellereau (St Laurence's, Foleshill, Coventry).

**12 - The Offchurch Group** with St Gregory, Offchurch; Chapels of Ease at St John the Baptist, Wappenbury with Easthorpe; St Margaret's, Hunningham and St Michael's. Weston-under-Wetherley. Our Mission Statement: *One Church fellowship receiving and sharing God's gifts in Christ across our five villages*. Recent successes include Messy Church, full Churches at all Christmas services, an outreach breakfast. Introducing modern worship to non-Eucharistic services during the interregnum. Prayer requested for – the right person to come forward to be the new Vicar. Prayer for success of

strategies to improve our financial situation. R – Richard Spicer; R (PTO) Jackie Brown.

**13 - Holy Trinity Long Itchington and St Esprit, Marton.** We praise God for new worshippers and for the Alpha and Lectio Divina in the pub which are bearing fruit. The recent re-launch of Messy Church went well, and the new "Mothers Prayer" Group is an encouragement. Our main prayer requests would be for prayer to become core to all we are and do. That the Holy Spirit would inspire (group) intercession and raise up faithful "prayer warriors" in the Benefice. R (PTO) – Terry Morris.

**16 – Harbury and Ladbroke** - Andy Batchelor their vicar is now back at the helm after a knee replacement; he was grateful for the prayers and the cover the team provided; we had an encouraging Christmas season. Messy and Muddy church continue to thrive and grow, and we have just reached the one year anniversary of '*The Collective*' in the local pub – we have a small number of regulars who have no other contact with the church and we are developing relationships and having some profound conversations. We continue to refine our parish vision for both Harbury and Ladbroke, and are fortunate to have some very committed and capable lay leaders, one of whom it is hoped will be commissioned soon. A new heating and lighting system is up and running, and working well. We have continued to strengthen our relationship with Harbury school after the appointment of a new head; Andy is now deputy chair of governors. We are also forging a new relationship with the local pre-school. We have begun '*Little Saints*' a toddler-oriented service with story and breakfast which we are hoping will grow. We are supporting a number of local families who face financial difficulties; we seek prayer that those in need would be identified to us. We could do with prayer that we can gather the support necessary to complete our '*Heat, Light and Stone*' project, with stonework repairs and an enhanced audio-visual system remaining to be done. Like many other churches, although numbers have recovered after Covid, it is much more difficult to find volunteers and I worry about people being overburdened. Also, for the leadership team as we continue to refine our parish vision, and particularly how that works itself out in Ladbroke – a very small rural community. R – Julie Batchelor

**18 – St James, Southam** - Giving thanks for the continuity of building strong relationships with and within the community and seeing God at work and His amazing provision; request for prayers for momentum to continue with regard to the works needed to the church building; and for more volunteers to step forward to serve the church and its mission of sharing God's love.

## PRAYER JOTTINGS – MARCH 2024

- The third selections from chapter 2 of Mark Oakley's *'The Collage of God'* (Canterbury, 2012) and chapter 2 of Chris Webb's *'God Soaked Life – discovering a kingdom spirituality'* (Hodder, 2017). Both reflect on being rooted in Scripture, a timely Lenten reminder for prioritizing daily prayer and bible reading, whatever form that takes.
- Mark Oakley speaks of *'Discovery'* – "Look!" Discover God's glory and a sense of God's presence with (you); Discovery, he says, comes through the Scriptures (a place of Sacred encounter), human relationships (the gift of human love), remembrance (memory of a shared life) ... "We slowly learn that we do not control the grace of God as it is shown to us in Jesus Christ."
- Chris Webb, on *'Heart Renewal'* reflects that he is 'getting better at recognizing the roots of my problems within myself.' Metanoia (or repentance) is not a mind issue but one of 'worldview' .... 'Only those who are wholly loving can live well and joyfully within the kingdom.... Love is everything' ... Psalm 1.1-4 *'Oh the joys ... of those who delight in the law of the LORD. Meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the river bank, bearing fruit each season.'* (NLT)
- The prayer theme this month is **Coventry Cathedral**. Coming up – the **Themes** for the next 3 months will be *Net Zero (Environmental Renewal and Creation Care) (April)*, *New Worshipping Communities (May)* and *Growing Leaders (June)*. Do consider sending me your prayer suggestions, and any other jottings.

### PRAYER – VACANCY IN SEE

Heavenly Father,  
Please help us  
as we appoint a new Bishop in our diocese.  
Give us wisdom to see as you see,  
to hear your voice and listen to one another.  
May Jesus' name be honoured.  
May your Spirit guide us in our decisions.  
May we do all this with your love,  
seeking your Kingdom and your glory,  
In the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.



• 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 elected on 14 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.

• **Wonder** - the monthly gathering at the Cathedral where people are invited to explore what they believe through engaging with the arts - has recently celebrated its first birthday. Canon Mary Gregory says "Join us in giving thanks for a growing community, deepening relationships and evenings of rich and honest reflection. Please pray for our plans to grow the team that co-creates Wonder each month and for the continuing flourishing of this group of wonderers and wanderers."

• Each month we focus on a different Deanery; in March we are praying for **Southam Deanery**, it will be **Rugby** in April, then **Alcester** in May, and **Fosse Deanery** in June. I look forward to receiving updates from area deans and clergy, and anyone else with specific prayer requests.

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