

**All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton**



**Pastoral Letter #79
February 2023**

Dear Church Family,

Our gospel Bible reading for the All-Age Service last week was Matthew 6 where Jesus tells those on the hillside where he is teaching to *'Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?'*

We then come across the mention of birds again, later in Matthew's gospel in chapter 10. This time, it's not birds in general that Jesus talks about, but sparrows: *'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs on your head are numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.'*

I wonder how long you've been someone who prays.

Whether you've been praying just a day or several decades, do you ever find yourself prioritising the 'big' prayers over the 'small' ones? Do you sometimes feel that God sees some prayers as more significant or worthy than others?

Following the Bible reading on Sunday, I suddenly became much more aware of sparrows in the garden. Interestingly, during the Big Garden Birdwatch at the end of January, the house sparrow was the most counted visitor with nearly 1.3 million sightings over the bird-watching weekend. So I decided to learn a little more about them.

Sparrows were common in biblical times and places, but their puny size meant they were often overlooked. If anything, their tendency to make nests in the eaves of people's houses made them real nuisances. Frankly, sparrows were pretty futile. In the UK today, sparrows aren't regarded as anything particularly special. They're quite ordinary birds and remain at the top of the rankings as the most commonly seen garden bird. I don't know about you, but at times I can view some of my prayers like this – just not particularly important and likely to be overlooked. However, these verses from Matthew 10 show the value God places even on the sparrow. And, Jesus says, if he looks after them, imagine the profound care and interest he has in our lives. He values us and each part of our week – our school, our work, what we get up to on days off, and our retirements.

So let's be encouraged in our personal prayers - to commit both the big and exciting, and the small and mundane to him. God wants us to partner with him as he works

through our whole lives. He doesn't categorise or prioritise our prayers; they all matter to him. Just like the sparrow.

Things to pray for in February include:

- The staff, parents and children of Cottenham Primary as they process the sad loss of a much-loved teacher, Katy Hancock. Please also pray for her family: parents, husband and her small children who are naturally devastated by her death
- Those affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria – the families of those who have died; the injured, those who have lost everything
- Those working in the NHS, currently under extreme pressure
- Wisdom for the government during the current cost of living crisis; for support for those who are struggling this winter
- Those whom we long to come to know the life-transforming love of Jesus, and the five people that many of us have decided to pray for as part of 'Pray for Five'
- The ongoing war in Ukraine, for an end to fighting
- Those who are unwell: Pauline, Yvonne, Marie, Deirdre, Hazel, Janet, and Tim
- The families of those who have died, including: Katy Hancock, Barbara Broughton, Revd. Bridget Baguley, Peggy Griffiths, Bill Miller, and John Loveluck.

On Wednesday, Lent begins. It doesn't seem five minutes since Christmas ended! Do pick up a 'Dust and Glory' Lent booklet from the Church Table. There are two Lent groups running on Wednesdays: at Frances Horgan's (5 Church Close) at 3pm where we will be comparing the Passion narratives in the gospels; and at Chris and Cheryl Lowe's (17 High St) at 7.15pm looking more deeply at the Dust and Glory material. Both begin on 1st March.

Don't forget our Ash Wednesday Service at 7.30pm with imposition of ashes, preceded on Shrove Tuesday by the Pancake Supper in the Church Hall from 5pm. All are welcome.

If you are receiving this letter and cannot get to church, do remember that we are very happy to bring church to you. If you'd like to receive a visit, have someone pray with you, or receive home communion, do let me know. It would be our pleasure.

Best wishes,

Revd Lynda Davies

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