

Prayer sheet 13
20 June 2020**Thank you for joining us in prayer.**

This week as we have been praying especially for wisdom for our parishes and cathedral as they open their doors for private prayer and funerals. Our clergy are asking for prayer for wisdom, compassion and calmness as they navigate the changes in lockdown regulations and manage the expectations of congregations and communities. Also, for couples whose weddings have still been postponed, families whose baptisms are at still not possible and congregations still waiting to worship together in the church building.

Our partner dioceses**Melanesia**

Our prayer requests, which come from a report on the impact of COVID-19 on families in the Solomon Islands

- Please pray for families suffering from food shortages due to COVID-19 import restrictions;
- Give thanks for the Mothers' Union's cooking classes helping families to make the most of the food they find, and for the church's vegetable plant distribution scheme helping families grow their own food.

The Melanesian Mission Summer 2020 magazine is now available. You can view the magazine at www.mmuk.net

Democratic Republic of Congo

- Thank God for Christian leaders, and for the small church groups that have sprung up;
- Please pray that the Coronavirus continues to be contained within the capital and that the new cases of Ebola reported in the west of DRC are contained;
- Pray for those affected by the violence;
- For leaders of the Congolese army, UN troops and government, that they will be serious about tackling the unrest as well as the coronavirus crisis.
- For the safety of the camps for displaced persons, where there is poverty, overcrowding and disease;
- Finally, pray for justice and peace for the people of Ituri.

Schools, including pre-schools and nurseries

- Please pray for our diocesan schools' team, local authorities, headteachers, senior leaders and governing bodies as they welcome the phased return of pupils over the coming weeks;
- That the anxiety felt by staff, pupils and parents would be eased, especially those who are having to balance work and care for their families;
- Pray for our pre-schools and nurseries as they welcome children back, for wisdom and patience, and for the children as they adjust to the changes;
- Please pray for students in Years 11 and 13, who would have been undertaking formal exams in May and June, as they await their grades and make plans for the next academic year.

From one of our hospitals

Here at Warrington and Halton Hospitals, as the number of patients with COVID 19 reduces, we are planning to resume the other treatments which were suspended, and safely re-introducing patient visiting. We would appreciate prayer for wisdom and guidance in doing these things and trying to get on with the new normal for all of us.

Business and Commerce

- Please continue to pray for businesses in our region and they re-open and start trading;
- Pray for wisdom for those in leadership roles and especially for those in customer-facing, for protection and energy as they navigate new ways of working and interacting with customers.

Rural ministry

- Please pray for the rural victims of domestic abuse and homelessness. There are fears that domestic abuse in the countryside is compounded by the lack of public transport which limits the opportunities for people to escape abusive relationships;
- Please pray for the rural homeless;
- Pray for the rural communities deprived of the social meeting places which agricultural shows provide and for the agricultural societies which are dealing with the financial implications of the loss of business.

Spotlight on Blacon

The Revd Tina Upton at Holy Trinity, Blacon has given us an update:

“We praise God and thank Him for His abundant, hilariously generous, provision for us at this time, for His provision and blessing to us of finances, people and adequate amounts of food for the need we have faced hitherto. The food hub in our church hall has come together in a truly miraculous way.

“Thirty-six volunteers are involved in delivering the service. These volunteers include church members, concerned members of the community, and also others from the wider area who wanted to give something back. The team formed was truly ‘thrown together’ at very short notice, but they work extremely well together, each using their gifts, and there is a very happy atmosphere in the church hall.

“More than 400 households have signed up. Not all need our input every week, and on average we provide food to about 200 households per week, approximately two thirds of which have children or teenagers. Some are fleeing domestic violence, others are refugees, others are struggling at or below the breadline. Most people collect a food parcel from either our hall or another venue on the estate, at one of four collection times per week. We are also providing baby milk and food, nappies, and sanitary products. Those unable to collect, receive a delivery from one of our carefully selected volunteers. Over the weeks, these deliverers have formed a really good relationship with their recipients, and the weekly (distanced) conversation can be most valuable. We also deliver a two-course cooked (chilled) meal to about sixty vulnerable elderly residents each week, and in the summer holidays we will be upscaling that for about a hundred families with activity bags for the children as well.

“The biggest challenge is going forwards from here, with an easing of lockdown while people’s needs may not be easing as quickly. The church hall currently looks like a food warehouse. In normal times, we have all kinds of activities, daytime and evening, seven days a week, including a G.P. clinic, A.A. group and uniformed organisations. None of those would be conceivably possible today. So, we are embarking on some alterations to the building to create a new room which could be used for further food storage so that the main hall can be accessed by those groups. Therefore, we are in the process of trying to arrange funding for this essential work. God has always provided for our needs, and we trust Him to provide at this time, too. We also need real wisdom and discernment about how to move from this emergency food provision to something more sustainable in the long-term, working in conjunction with the Community Outreach Project this church has developed over a number of years, but which has had to halt its operations during the lockdown.”

Department of Outreach

- In the light of the issues raised again recently by the Black Lives Matter campaign, please pray for the Church to be fully committed and active in working for racial justice in local communities and across the world;
- Please pray also for our children and young people, that they will understand the importance of racial justice and stand up for what is right in their schools, churches and homes.
- Please also pray for our Department of Outreach as the recruitment process is started for a new Director of Outreach, and for Debbie Dalby as she steps down in the later part of this year from her role.

Houses of Prayer

The Houses of Prayer initiative in the diocese began in 2019. The idea is for parishes to look afresh at one of the foundational roles of their church buildings and their grounds - to be a House of Prayer. We are considering what is already happening, as well as open to new ways to be more intentional and invitational about prayer. So far, more than forty parishes are part of the group, with representation from each deanery.

As COVID-19 lockdown measures begin to ease, it is encouraging to see church buildings being opened as a house of prayer for individuals. Could this be a key moment where God is calling people back to the simplicity and necessity of prayer? Research seems to indicate an increase in the number of people praying

Prayer requests

- Please pray that the Houses of Prayer initiative continues to grow in this diocese with a deepening sense of urgency;
- Pray that more parishes join the group;
- Pray that the parishes in the group sense what the Holy Spirit is saying about how best to use their space and offer prayer support for the range of people entering the building;
- Pray for unity and the sharing of ideas and stories among parishes as we seek to encourage and discern together;
- Please pray for eyes to be open in local communities for people to sense a need to pray and make contact with their local church for support and guidance;
- Finally, please pray that the simplicity and necessity of prayer remains a priority in these days.

The following prayer is from ROOTS for Churches Ltd and is reproduced with permission.

God of Hope

*God of hope,
where things seem to be one big tangle of pain and unhappiness,
intervene with your saving love;
where people are in conflict or locked in a stalemate,
release them from the cycle of war;
where your name is outlawed and your children are forced to hide,
break through their darkness and be God-revealed to them;
where despair takes centre stage and depression and anxiety
sharpen their claws,
fill those situations with unexpected peace and joy.*

*God of hope,
God-with-us,
God of all time and of every place:
may the earth be filled with the knowledge of you,
and may your light flow over the world like a covering,
bringing protection from the darkness
and from the evil that often frightens and wounds us.*

Amen

Thank you, for joining us in prayer
Jonathon and the Foxhill Team.