

InFocus

Welcome to the latest edition of *InFocus*. Our aim is to help you keep in touch with the activities of the National Church Institutions. Do have a look at *InReview*, our sister publication, designed as an A3 version for notice boards.

Archbishops call for ‘great wave of prayer’ for evangelism during Pentecost

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York are inviting churches to pray for the evangelisation of the nation during the week before Pentecost Sunday.

The Archbishops have written to every serving parish priest in the Church of England expressing their longing “to see a great wave of prayer across our land, throughout the Church of England and many other Churches” from 8th-15th May.

The week of prayer will culminate in ‘Beacon events’ around the country over Pentecost weekend, where people will pray for the renewal of the Holy Spirit and the confidence to share their faith.

In their letter the Archbishops said: “At the heart of our prayers will be words that Jesus himself taught us – ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.’ It is impossible to overstate the life-transforming power of the Lord’s Prayer. It is a prayer that is reassuring enough to be on the lips of the dying and yet dangerous enough to be banned in cinemas. It is famous enough to be spoken each day by billions in hundreds of languages and yet intimate enough to draw us ever closer into friendship with Jesus Christ. It is simple enough to be memorised by small children and yet profound enough to sustain a whole lifetime of prayer. When we pray it with sincerity and with joy, there is no imagining the new ways in which God can use us to his glory.”

The Archbishops are suggesting various ways churches can engage with the week of prayer. These include holding a day or week of continuous ‘24/7’ prayer as parishes, teams or deaneries; saying special prayers in

Sunday worship; prayer walking; or handing out a novena prayer card to every congregation member.

The Beacon events will take place in the following places:

St Paul’s Cathedral (Saturday 14th May) – hosted by the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd Richard Chartres, and Pete Greig, founder of 24/7 prayer, with sung worship led by Tim Hughes and Jake Isaac.

Durham Cathedral (Sunday 15th May) – with sung worship led by Lou Fellingham.

Coventry Cathedral (Sunday 15th May) – with sung worship led by Noel Richards.

Winchester Cathedral (Sunday 15th May) – with sung worship led by Matt Redman.

St Michael le Belfrey, York (Sunday 15th May) - hosted by Matthew Porter & Miriam Swaffield with sung worship led by Tom Holmes

Canterbury Cathedral (Sunday 15th May) – hosted by Archbishop Justin Welby and Pete Greig, with sung worship led by Tim Hughes.

Archbishop Justin will send a message via live video link to other Beacon events taking place at the same time as the Canterbury event.

Partners in the week of prayer initiative include 24-7 Prayer, HOPE, the World Prayer Centre, the Neighbourhood Prayer, Network, and the National Day of Prayer and Worship.

For more information about the initiative, visit: www.thykingdom.co.uk

International Women's Day celebrated with Bishops'

voices

Seven women Bishops in the Church of England have nominated women who have inspired them in a series of short videos to mark International Women's Day 2016 (IWD2016).

From the first female judge in Pakistan who participated in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda through to the serving Poet Laureate and from Gold medal winning Olympic rowers to nurses working with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe, the Bishops nominate individual women from across the world whose lives, work and achievements continue to inspire. A short film combining the nominations can be seen here

The Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Revd. Christine Hardman, explains how she hopes her two granddaughters will be inspired by people like Olympic rowers, Heather Stanning and Helen Glover who made history as the first British women to win a rowing gold Olympic medal. Bishop Christine says, 'It was clear from their faces that this was the culmination of hours and hours of gut-wrenching training, and that they had to work together so closely as a team. They really supported one another in that race, worked closely together, and, at the end of the race, when Heather was nearing exhaustion, she heard Helen behind her saying, "Keep going, keep going! They're just behind us".'

Dame Sarah Mullally, the UK's former Chief Nurse and now Bishop of Crediton, highlights the dedication of an individual in serving mothers and children living with HIV who have been marginalised in Zim-

babwe. Her nominee, Sister Eugenie, is the source of inspiration: "It was her faith that motivated her to be compassionate but also to find solutions for people. To find solutions for those that are most marginalised with minimal amounts of resources. So I hope that my faith will not be dead, but be seen in action. And that I can use the resources I have in an imaginative way, to make a difference to people's lives, because it's often the simplest things that make the biggest difference to people."

The Rt. Revd. Alison White, the Bishop of Hull, is inspired by Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy: "She can write very movingly and deeply about some of the most personal things in life. She can challenge us to deal with some of the big issues that are facing us, so she's written poems about MP's expenses, she's written about climate change, she's written about the war in Afghanistan. And somehow, she holds those two aspects together, the deeply personal and how that plays out in the public issues that face us all. And that's the kind of place that I think I am called to inhabit as a Bishop, to live with the profound things of our human life. Not to be afraid of the difficult things, but to be able to laugh at the really joyful things, and to treat tenderly the things that are important about the way we are human beings. How inspiring is that?"

To find out more about International Women's Day visit: www.internationalwomensday.com

To watch the Church of England films, visit: www.churchofengland.org/IWD2016

Celebrating a special relationship on Godparents'

Sunday

Resources including liturgy and ideas for parish activities are now available from www.churchsupporthub.org to help celebrate Godparents' Sunday on 1st May. This dedicated day is a response to research commissioned by the Archbishops' Council which shows the importance of godparents to families bringing their children for baptism.

In Review asked Revd Kate Bottley, who has five godchildren, why the relationship is important: 'My Godchildren are all so wonderfully different and I get to journey with them in faith for the rest of their lives. My husband's Godmother did the reading at our wedding and my own Godmother never forgets my kids' birthdays, she calls them her 'Great Godchildren'. My kids' Godparents pray regularly for them and when something big is happening in their lives, like exams, I always make sure to let them know so they can pray extra hard.'

Bishops have also shared their Godparent stories with In Review. The Bishop of Huntingdon, David Thomson said of his Godparents: "I was blessed with three very holy godparents – a monk, a missionary and a godmother who eventually entered a

religious community too. Their prayers must have been powerful to enable a crumbly cookie like me to become a bishop! They continue to be an inspiration: my godmother in her 80s rebuilt a hospital in Africa!

The Bishop of Dudley, Graham Usher said: "My Godmother has always seemed delightfully unconventional and refreshingly different. She's been in the background throughout my life and has been really committed to coming to every major life event. She says it was a bit more than she agreed to, having a Godson who has become a priest and a bishop!"

The Godparents' Sunday service liturgy can be used for a Eucharist, but could also be adapted for a Service of the Word and includes the recommended lectionary readings and authorized Collect.

The Church Support Hub website has lots of ideas from candle lighting, creating a memory box, highlighting special godparent relationships for parish magazines and social media or hosting a tea party.

Full details of resources available can be found at: www.churchsupporthub.org/godparentsunday

Archbishop speaks to Mary Berry about Easter

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was featured on Mary Berry's Easter Feast on BBC 2.

Mrs Berry, who is one of the judge's on the BBC's The Great British Bake Off, presented him with a traditional Easter Simnel cake she had prepared. The Archbishop described the cake as "absolutely wonderful"

Over tea and cake in his study, the Archbishop told Mrs Berry that Easter was an opportunity to "celebrate life and celebrate hope" as well as to remember loved ones who had passed away.

Archbisop Justin said: "There's a wonderful moment at the end of Evensong on Easter Sunday afternoon, and I go home and we sit down and we have some cake and some tea with the family; and it's relishing the human contact, the love for one another, the security in one another that is the gift of family. And I think that's one of my rejoicing moments.

You can find out more about the programme, as well as links to watch online at bit.ly/WelbyCake

Just Pray film showcases the Saturday Gathering community in Halifax

The Yorkshire church where homeless, ex addicts and those living on the margins have come to faith is the latest star of the justpray campaign for the Church of England.

Men and women who came to faith through the Saturday Gathering have featured in a series of short dramatic films for Lent and Easter that bring their own struggles into the retelling of Psalm 22 with the message that faith and prayer isn't easy.

And now the church in Halifax town centre – and the Church of England minister, Linda Maslen, who is part of the ecumenical team that run it - is the star of the latest film offering from the Church of England for its justpray website – a one stop digital hub to encourage people that prayer is for everyone.

The Saturday Gathering is a fresh expressions of church in Halifax, West Yorkshire. Growing out of a Food Bank and Drop In Centre run by Christians Together in Calderdale, it has become one of the fastest growing churches in Yorkshire and has baptized over 90 people in the last three years.

The volunteer ecumenical group started to offer prayers to those using the food bank, and they found people began to come back wanting to know more about the God who was answering their prayers. They realized a traditional church was not an option for these people – many of whom have low literacy and very different backgrounds – so the Saturday Gathering was born.

When it began to grow out of its premises in the old Ebenezer Methodist Church

in the centre of town, the local authority, Calderdale Council, gave the group the empty building next door for a peppercorn rent to continue to provide the much needed services – which include daily hot food, a winter shelter for the homeless and a homework club for children.

The campaign to promote justpray.uk will conclude with the launch of a short form film on Palm Sunday which casts the main characters from the Saturday Gathering in their own interpretation of a scene from the Passion of Christ.

All the short teaser films have been released with an accompanying podcast on the justpray.uk website which launched the Lords' Prayer advert just before Christmas that was banned from the cinemas. The teasers are loosely based on Psalm 22 – the words Jesus was reported to have said on the cross.

The film stars have all recently come to faith through the Saturday Gathering and most have experienced crime, alcohol, drug addiction, homelessness or violence in their lives.

The first teaser: Emma's Story: My God, My God: Why Have You Forsaken Me was released on Ash Wednesday and the final film will be released on Palm Sunday.

To watch all the films, hear the stories and join in with a global community of prayer, visit: www.justpray.uk