

LET'S COME TOGETHER

**Year of Prayer 2023**



# Year of Prayer 2023

## A message from Bishop Richard Jackson

Wherever we are on our journey in faith, prayer is a significant part of it. Prayer is for everyone, and everyone can pray.

As part of living out our values in every corner of our diocese, I have called us all to join in a **Year of Prayer in 2023**.



We hope through prayerful engagement across many communities, villages and towns of our diocese that lives will be transformed and that more people will come to know Jesus Christ.

The Rt. Revd Richard Jackson  
Bishop of Hereford



Perhaps, you feel a stirring in your heart to pray a bit more in 2023. If you do, we hope that this information might help you a little bit.

## Creating a life of prayer ...

*“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed”*

(Mark 1.35)

The great thing about prayer is that we don't have to follow a specific formula; at its heart it is about a relationship between you and God where you spend time together and chat.

Prayer can be most effective when it isn't something we do every once in a while. To understand a bit more about prayer, we can look at the example of Jesus which he gave to us during his earthly life.

### **Have a certain time**

Jesus appears to pick a certain time to spend time with God. I am not sure it matters when, but Jesus seems to make this a priority in his diary.

### **Have a certain place**

Jesus appears to have a specific place he went to. Perhaps we might have a favourite place, chair or spot that helps us remove the distractions and helps us meet with God?

### **Have a certain plan**

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he gave them a helpful outline to pray in the 'Lord's Prayer'. Perhaps it might be helpful for us to have a simple plan to help us meet with God (and it doesn't have to be the same plan each day).

Not all ways of praying will work for everyone; just as we are unique so is our way of praying. On the next pages are some suggestions of how you might want to try praying. Or you might want to stick with ways that work well for you, or others have told you about.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

Most of us know this prayer by heart, and it is used by every Christian tradition. It has a place in every Anglican act of worship, and forms a pattern for prayer for Christians:

- We bless God and pray for our world, our communities and our lives to be shaped by God's will;
- We pray for daily needs to be met,
- For forgiveness for wrongdoings, strength to resist temptation and protection from danger.

Maybe you would like to take some time to pray this prayer today; or quietly reflect on what it means to you for today?

## **Silent Prayer**

We begin by lighting a candle to remind ourselves that Christ is present with us, in this place and at this time, and say a prayer like this one:

*Thank you, heavenly Father,  
for the graces you have given us today.  
May your Holy Spirit now guide us into  
your loving presence. For it is from there  
that we find rest and refreshment from this world.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

We take a few minutes to still ourselves, from the busyness and the concerns of the day, as we prepare to meet with God.

We then might use the following ways to pray:

### *Listening Prayer:*

Sit in your chair, upright but comfortable, with your back supported. Now just notice the sounds that you hear, sounds far away. Just hear them, don't even try to name them ... Notice fainter sounds, then sounds which are nearer. Just listen, become aware of them ... And the sound of your own heartbeat, faint, but your very own rhythm of life ... And the sound of silence in your place of prayer, the silence within yourself ... *(adapted from Praying in Lent by Donal Neary SJ)*.

### *Sacred word prayer:*

Sit and allow your body to relax. As you relax, breath in, slowly, while saying, under your breath: 'Abba'. As you breathe out slowly and quietly say under your breath: 'I belong to you'. You can use whatever phrase you find most helpful to you. Sacred word prayers begin by repeating a word/phrase on your lips. After some time, the prayer become silent or mental and repeated in your mind. Finally, it becomes a continuous prayer in the heart, the inner core of our being. Let this progression happen naturally as you are ready.

Or you might want to develop your own way?

### **Praying with Scripture/Psalms**

Sometimes taking a short piece of scripture and just slowly reading it a few times, as the words sink into our hearts, can stir our hearts deep within and release a prayer that bubbles up to the surface.

All scripture is helpful but often some of Psalms can be really powerful at reminding us of the highs and lows of life.

We might find God reminding us of prayers for ourselves. We might find that people's names and situations, triggered by what we are reading, might pop into our minds and help us pray.

### **Praying with the News/Newspaper**

Sometimes while we read newspapers or watch the news, we will find our hearts stirred to pray for some of the situations that we are before us. If that happens, take time to 'offer to God' what you have read/seen and ask for Him to 'be at work' with that situation.

### **Praying while ironing (or doing)**

Some people love to pray while sitting still. Others need to be doing something. If that is you, find something to do while you pray. I had a friend whose best prayer time was while they ironed! If you pray while driving, please do keep your eyes open.

### **Praying with a prayer diary**

Each month in our parish magazine ('Border News') we have a prayer reflection and prayer ideas. That could be a lovely way to pray each month.

Our Deanery also has a prayer diary which you can download from our website to use each month or view on Facebook. If you prefer a paper copy, please let one of our clergy know.

### **Prayer walking**

You might be someone who likes to walk and prayer. What better way than to ask God to be at work in the places, and people's lives, as you walk around. You might not want to pray out loud – but you are allowed to pray in the silence of your heart.

Of course, you would also spend some time walking in nature and noticing how you feel or what God could be saying as you walk.

Please remember that we have our own labyrinth at St Dubricius, which many have enjoyed walking. It is in place each year from June to September.

### **Pray with someone**

Just as most of us like a tea, coffee, and chat with someone, it is okay to pray with them too. It isn't about saying the right words or getting it all 'correct' but it is about asking God to be in your conversations or praying for the situations that you have talked about.

### **Prayer groups**

Perhaps you would like to join others; there can be something quite special in doing this. Throughout the year we will try to organise sometimes of prayer in our churches, which you might want to join us at. There is never any pressure to pray out loud – God hears and responds to the prayers of our heart.

Our **Ladies Prayer Group** meets to pray on the first Monday of the month in Wyesham, Monmouth. You would be warmly invited to join them at 2.30pm- please call Connie for more information (Tel 01600 713723).

### **Prayer journalling**

Something that has grown in popularity over the last few years is writing your prayers down in a notepad. Some people enjoy writing, or drawing pictures, and God can be in these as much as he can be in what we say out loud.

### **Prayerful retreat**

Perhaps you would like to spend a day learning how to find God more in your life. We are very fortunate to have Robin & Carole (Whitchurch) who run '**travelling light**' retreats. Please do contact them for more information [www.travellinglightchristianretreats.co.uk](http://www.travellinglightchristianretreats.co.uk)

***As you can see there are lots of ways to pray. Maybe you would like to try some this year?***

### A final thought ...

Jesus didn't say '**if** we pray' but he did say '**when** we pray' (Matthew 6.5-8). There is a clear 'call' for Jesus' disciples to pray and spend time talking to him.

Prayer isn't necessarily meant to be 'hard work' but it is meant to help us draw closer to him and grow in our relationship with him.

### Further help ...

If we can help you further, please do speak to one of our clergy (Tim, Penny or Jill) who will gladly meet with you and talk about Bishop Richard's year of prayer; chat with you; or pray with you.



**wyereaches.org**