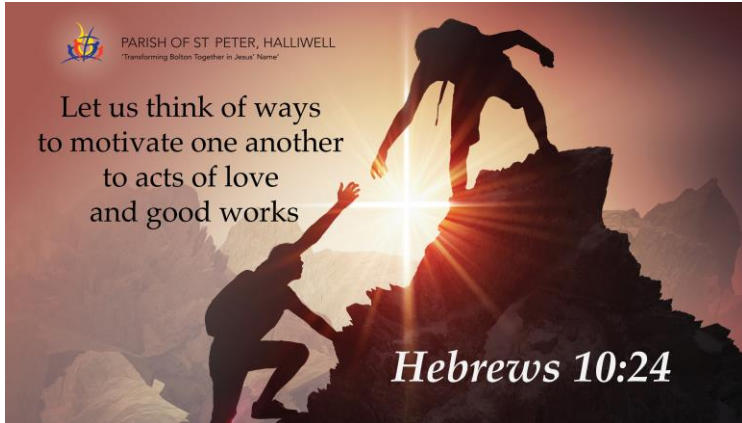


Prayer Diary

Week of Prayer November 2024



My Church Commitment



Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-17)



PARISH OF ST. PETER'S, HALLIWELL
'Transforming Bolton Together in Jesus' Name'

INTRODUCTION - A CALL TO PRAYER

At our Parish-wide Vision service on 6th October, Revd. Alan shared a vision for us to grow in commitment in five key areas. These were:



This week is an opportunity to spend time in prayer as we consider our individual response. We want to be guided by God and to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help us live as Christ's ambassadors on earth. Each day we will pray about one of the topics from the five areas of commitment.

Commitment can be defined as the decision to do what needs to be done, whatever the cost — a definition that characterises countless heroes throughout history. Christian commitment, however, can best be defined by starting with God's examples: " 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' " (John 3:16). God decided to save a lost world. The cost was the cruel, despicable death of His only Son. What made this commitment Christian? Because it was inspired by love, the love defined by Jesus: " 'Greater love has no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' " (John 15:13).

Commitment does not ask "How hard shall I try?" Commitment says, "Whatever it takes!" Commitment does not say, "I can never be perfect." Commitment says, "I may not be perfect, but in Christ I can be."

We are to be **Jesus' family on Jesus' mission**. Our Lord said, " 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' " (Matt. 11:28–30).



MY COMMITMENT TO PRAY

MONDAY 25TH NOVEMBER



For Christians, prayer should be a priority, simply because it was for Jesus. There are many examples in the Bible of Jesus praying; He prayed with others (Luke 9:28), he prayed alone and frequently (Luke 5:16). Jesus did not pray in a cold, distant manner, but in heartfelt supplication, demonstrating empathy and a genuine love for God. This is demonstrated clearly in John 17, where Jesus prays for Himself and His immediate disciples, as well as for all believers

So prayer is our time to communicate with God, express gratitude, and seek guidance. As it says in Philippians 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." This scripture reminds us that no matter the situation, we should always turn to prayer.



We believe that God created everyone to be in relationship with him, and that he loves to hear from each one of us as often as possible. Just like you might talk to a close family member, so we have the privilege of talking to God. God has made himself known to many who have reached out to him with an open heart.

So today, let's start the week in prayer. This can include thanking God for what he has given us, praising God for who he is, asking God for help or telling him that we're sorry and asking for forgiveness. Or we might simply want to tell God what's on our hearts.

MY COMMITMENT TO SHARE

TUESDAY 26TH NOVEMBER



Jesus calls us to share our faith with those around us. Such sharing can take many different forms. It might be as simple as not hiding the fact that you attend church, taking a stance based on Christian values in discussions, offering to pray for a non-Christian friend who is going through a hard time. One way of sharing your faith publicly is to be baptised.

In Christianity, baptism is the mark of admission to the church (the body of Christ), symbolised by the pouring or sprinkling of water on the head or by immersion in water. You may have been baptised as a believer or you may have been baptised as a baby, when your parents brought you into the church community. If the latter, you may have made a public confession of your own faith later, either through confirmation or by renewal of baptismal vows. Whatever the mechanism, baptism symbolises your membership of Christ's body, His church. Legend has it that Martin Luther placed a large plaque in his room that read: "When you wash your face, remember your baptism."



If you have not yet made this commitment, spend some time in prayer today considering whether this is the next step in your personal journey of faith. What is holding you back? Do you have questions or doubts? If so, talk to one of the church leaders who will be pleased to assist you.

If you are baptised, think today of how that affects your everyday life as one who has publicly confessed to being a follower of Jesus. It may be appropriate to spend some time in confession, knowing that, if we confess our failings, God is faithful and just and will forgive us. Baptism unites us as members of God's church, so let's commit to live out our baptism vows and share our faith with others

Also spend time considering your own circles of work colleagues and friends. Do they know that you are a Christian? If being a Christian suddenly became illegal, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

MY COMMITMENT TO SERVE

WEDNESDAY 27TH NOVEMBER



For many Christians, "Christian service" signifies Christian usefulness: to be a regular attender at church, a contributor to its finances; to become teacher of a class, or leader of a young people's group; to engage in evangelistic activities; to "witness for Christ" by verbally announcing His power to save and satisfy, telling others of "what He means to me."

Yet, as the term is used in Scripture, one may do all those things—and not be engaged in any Christian service! A "servant" is one who is not at his own disposal—but is at the beck and call of another, having voluntarily yielded and agreed to do his bidding. Said the centurion, "For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (Luke 7:8).

Servants—then, are not to please themselves—but are under the control of another, to be employed entirely at his discretion. Thus, to "serve the Lord" is not to do something for him—as though we did Him a favour—but it is to render something to Him. It is to understand His just requirement of me, to accept His absolute authority, to dedicate myself wholly to Him. It signifies that I honestly attempt to discharge the obligations of a servant; who seeks to please Him and promote His interests. So, to "serve" Christ is to love Him, to give Him the supreme place in my heart and life, to devote all my strength to doing of what He requires, and abstain from all He prohibits. Love to Christ is to be expressed in obedience unto Him: "If you love me—keep my commandments" (John 14:15).



So today, ask God how you can best serve Him. Consider the gifts you have been given and how you might use them in God's service. Consider how you spend your time and whether you can offer an extra hour or so a month to support God's work in some way. There are lots of ways to get involved!

MY COMMITMENT TO MEET THURSDAY 28TH NOVEMBER



Fellowship with one another was high on the agenda for the early church. We read in Acts 2 that they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. This Church was a tight-knit community of dedicated followers of Christ. The strength of their fellowship is demonstrated in verses 44-45: no-one was in need because they cared for each other. Verse 46 reveals that the breaking of bread (sharing a meal together) was practised in smaller groups in homes rather than as one Church of three thousand plus people.

Our modern equivalent is small groups, sometimes called connect groups, house groups or life groups. This is where Christians can meet together, study and discuss the Bible and pray together. Over time, the group develops and people start sharing more deeply, creating deeper relationships and a mutual support network. Whilst people can and do meet in other church groups, nothing can replace the connect group as a means to grow in faith.



If you are not in a small group, prayerfully consider joining one today. If you are already in one, give thanks for all the good things that membership provides and pray that relationships between group members would continue to deepen.

MY COMMITMENT TO GIVE

FRIDAY 29TH NOVEMBER



Generosity is another feature of life in the early Church. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had a need. Part of this generosity finds its impetus in the depth of fellowship that existed between the early Christians.

At the same time, that depth of community did not extend to communal living – they still retained property: “They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had a need.”

John Wesley said, “The last part of a man to be converted is his wallet.” Martin Luther said, “Every man needs two conversions: the first, his heart, the second, his wallet!”



God demands our undivided loyalty. Joshua declared, “Choose this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15). We must choose whether we will be loyal to God or to riches. Ultimately, we are all stewards of what God has entrusted to us. We are responsible to God for how we use his many blessings. “From everyone to whom much is given, much will be required” (Luke 12:48). God will hold us all responsible for the use of the material wealth he gives us.

In our own church, reflect on the good that the money you give does and think about how much more the church could do given additional resources. Do you use your money for kingdom purposes? We are blessed by God so that we can bless God. Our possessions are not to be worshipped but to be used for the glory of God’s kingdom. Pray today that God would guide you in this area, and perhaps take the opportunity to review our personal giving before God.

MY COMMITMENT TO REVIEW

SATURDAY 30TH NOVEMBER

Today, let's review the topics we have covered so far this week. We have seen that being a Christian, a member of the body of Christ, is very different from being a member of a social group or any other type of club. We've looked first at prayer, which is the bedrock on which everything else is built. We looked at baptism as the mark of admission to the church and the call to share our faith. We've considered what serving means, the benefits of meeting in small groups and our calling to generosity.

We will return to these five areas repeatedly in the months ahead as we seek to build commitment in our fellowships and parish. Let's think about our personal commitment to Christ and His church, and how we can help to fulfil the mission He gave us. It may be helpful to honestly rate yourself in each area using a gauge like the one shown in order to identify which areas need improvement. We are all a work in progress; all on a journey together.



MY COMMITMENT TO MISSION

SUNDAY 1ST DECEMBER

As we come to the end of our week together, we consider our mission. The early Church was an evangelistic Church. "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2: 47) The Church was evangelistic! It reached out to a lost world.

Let's remember our vision to **"transform Bolton together in Jesus' name."** As Jesus' family on Jesus' mission, we need to be "salt and light" in our community to bring God's light into our broken world.



At a recent 6:30 service, Revd. Vinny Whitworth called us to be "a beacon for the lost". Pray that God would give you opportunities to be a witness for Him and that, when He does, you would be filled with the Holy Spirit and have the right words to say.