

## Pause for Prayer - 30th July 2021 - Community

To begin our time of prayer together, let us call to mind Paul's advice to the Phillipians:

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

We are going to explore different communities within our locality, praying for a better understanding of God's purpose. We shall consider all the many people within these communities, of all creeds and nationalities, and how we are all connected.

So let us imagine that we are standing outside this church of ours, looking at its familiar shape. We shall return to that but now let us imagine we are floating above our church and see not only our parish but our locality - the surrounding villages and the town of Banbury. We see the B3 bus travelling through the village and into Longford Park. We see the town with its shopping centre, high street and retail parks, the hospital, the train station, the schools and nurseries, the public houses and restaurants, the factories, the building sites: all filled with people made in the image of God and all with particular needs and concerns.

Let us pray for the **Horton Hospital** community and for the surrounding doctors' surgeries. Let us pray for everyone involved in the health of the population, all with a vital part to play: domestic staff, radiologists, nurses, physiotherapists, administrative staff, surgeons, GPs, midwives, health visitors to name a few. Pray for their resilience in the difficult times we have faced and the uncertain future. Pray for the patients and their families, facing worrying times.

**Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but serve: bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience and courage, they may minister to the suffering. Amen**

Let us pray for the **Retail and Leisure** communities. As we walk around the town we see so many closed shops and the subsequent loss of livelihood for those who worked within them. We pray for Sally and the staff of our local shop and post office and give thanks that they went the extra mile in the midst of lockdowns. We give thanks for the Chaplaincy for Banbury Ecumenical Project and the support they give to shop workers.

We pray for the pubs and restaurants getting used to a different way of working and the loss of income they have suffered. In our parish we pray for the Spice Room, The Plough, the Horse and Jockey and the cafe at Cotefield Garden Centre.

We pray for our leisure facilities - the gyms and especially Bannatynes Health Club, Spiceball Park Leisure Centre and the town's open air swimming pool. We give thanks that they provide opportunities for exercise, so vital for mind and body.

We pray for cinemas and libraries and let us pause now awhile to consider the places that we know specifically need our prayers.

**Dear Father, please sustain those who are facing difficult times, when everything seems uncertain and their future unknown. Reassure them of your love and that you alone have a plan and a purpose for everyone. Amen**

Let us pray for the **new communities** in our midst. For Longford Park, Cotefield, Ironstone Place and the planned development by the flyover. We give thanks for Nick, our new curate, who lives in Longford Park, and pray for his work amongst his neighbours. We give thanks for our website and Facebook pages helping newcomers to learn about our church and faith. May we all support, by example and prayer, any initiatives that will let the new residents know of the love of Christ and pray for these now.

**Most merciful Father, you have called us to be a caring church, reflecting in our lives your infinite care for us, your children. Help us to fulfil our calling and to care for one another in an unselfish fellowship of love; and to care for the world around us in sharing with us the good news of your love. Amen**

Let us pray for **schools, nurseries and the community of young people**. We pray for the three primary schools in our parish and the Saltway and Kingsfield Nurseries, that they will be places of love, support and challenge for all pupils. We pray for all staff and governors and especially Dee Loader, who will become Bishop Loveday School's new Headteacher next term. We pray for the secondary schools in the town that the primary schools feed into and pray that the love of Christ will be known in all these establishments. We pause to pray for any young person who needs our prayers at this time.

**We thank you Lord for the exuberance of young people. Help us to guide and encourage them, allowing them the freedom to explore while providing care to keep them safe. We pray for our schools, for teachers and staff who work in them; may they be places of discovery, adventure and learning where children feel accepted and secure. Amen**

Let us pray for our **ageing community** and especially Dillon Court and Fairholme House and give thanks for the staff and residents of Fairholme House and the managing committee and residents of Dillon Court. These are difficult times for staff and visitors, balancing the Covid precautions with the needs and wishes of the residents and their families. We pray for Liz's ministry in Fairholme House. Let us pray for our elderly relatives and friends now, remembering any that may be struggling.

**Hear us, O Lord, as we pray for the health and well-being of our elderly friends and family, that they may live a healthy and happy life surrounded by people who love and care. Amen**

Let us pray and give thanks for our **community of key workers**: the bin men, the bus, taxi and train drivers, the postmen, the supermarket staff. We pray for those who have lost their lives due to Covid. We pray that keyworkers will stay safe whilst restrictions ease.

**Oh God, whose grace is sufficient for all our needs: lift us, we beseech you, above the doubts and anxieties of the present time, into the calm of your presence, that guarded by your peace we may serve you without fear all the days of our life. Amen**

**Finally we are going to pray for our church community.**

Imagine that you are standing outside this church of ours, looking at its familiar shape, and thinking of all it represents - the worship week by week, the daily prayer which no one sees, the spiritual energy which inspires people for their weekday work, the groups which meet here, the good works done. The band of Christians that make up this local church of ours. Think of those who have not returned to worship here since lockdown, due to fear or incapacity or just because they have got out of the habit. Think of those who have engaged with Facebook, the website and online services and have tentatively explored their faith during lockdown, that ways can be found to engage with them.

Now try and see this church as God sees it, and loves it. Pray now for the life of this church, mentioning in particular any special concern you have about our church life now

**Send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions, and power to our witness. Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you, and in service to our local community**

Lord God as we prepare to leave this time of peace and prayer, help us to keep in mind all those for whom we have prayed today, to continue praying for them and supporting them in whatever way we can. Pour your blessings on them and us, now and always. Amen

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen**