Prayer Diary

December 2017 to February 2018
Foreword from Bishop Graham

Next July, the Diocese of Worcester is teaming up with the Diocese of Winchester for a young adults’ pilgrimage to Taizé.

Taizé is an ecumenical community of monks, living on a hillside in France’s Burgundy countryside. It draws thousands of young people each summer, from across Europe and further afield, to spend a week living a simple life of prayer, silence and bible study.

I know many Christians who in their youth drank from the spiritual well of Taizé and this had a profound experience upon the rest of their lives, as well as their Christian witness and service.

Over these next few months please join me in praying that young people aged 18 – 25 from across the Diocese will be encouraged to join this pilgrimage. For some it will seem unfamiliar, even strange, but with your encouragement they might hear God’s call for their lives more clearly as they sing chants and spend time with others from many cultures, places and situations. The first thing they will learn is that, wherever we are from, we are all held by the common embrace of God in Jesus.

+ Graham
Welcome to this latest edition of the prayer diary which starts right at the beginning of the new church year. As we continue to pray for all the parishes in the Diocese, this quarter we’re focusing on the deaneries of Malvern, Stourport and Martley and Worcester West.

We also pray for Bishops around the world using the Anglican Cycle of Prayer and the Porvoo prayer calendar (www.porvoochurches.org) - these are included in italics at the bottom of each day (unfortunately at the time of going to press, these were unavailable for 2018). Plus each month we pray for our overseas partners – the Diocese of Peru, the Diocese of Morogoro in Tanzania and the Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland (which includes Magdeburg in Eastern Germany).

Do let me know if you’ve got a story to feature on a Sunday in a future diary - the more notice you can give me the better! And if you (or someone you know) would like a large-print copy of this prayer diary, please email me on ssetchell@cofe-worcester.org.uk, or contact the Diocesan Office reception on 01905 20537.

Best wishes,
Sam Setchell, Communications Officer
Mission Development Officer, Doug Chaplin, writes about world mission:
The last “missionary” I met was a South Korean working in England, primarily but not exclusively with South Korean expatriate communities in this country. Mission in today’s church is, as someone once said, “From everywhere to everywhere”. Pretty much every country sends missionaries somewhere else, and pretty much every country receives missionaries from elsewhere.

World mission at its best is always about partnerships of friendship, support, and encouragement between Christians of different cultures, helping local and national churches live out the missionary calling of God in their culture.

Traditionally 29 November, the eve of St Andrew’s Day, has been kept as a day of intercession and thanksgiving for the missionary work of the Church. It recalls Andrew as the first missionary, as in John’s gospel, he is the first person to bring someone – his brother Peter – to Jesus.

Given the changed shape of global mission today, it is still a good day to pray for the individuals who serve as mission partners in other countries and cultures. Pray that they may find love and support in the churches they support, develop or plant. Pray also that their vision and experience may help the Christians and churches they work with to be more critical of their own culture, and how to serve God within it.

Pray also for the work of the two main Anglican Mission agencies, CMS (Church Mission Society) and USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel) as they help churches learn from, support and challenge each other about how best to share God’s love in both their local context and a global world.

Malvern Deanery - Rural Dean: David Nichol; Lay Chair: David Sparkes
Diocese of Wad Medani (Sudan): Bishop Saman Farajalla Mahdi
God With Us – A Christmas campaign

Throughout Advent and Christmas this year, the Church of England will be running the #GodWithUs campaign and they are encouraging all parishes to get involved.

Archbishop Justin Welby said:
“The constant refrain of Christmas, in carols and readings, is that God is with us. In whatever situations you find yourself this Christmas, God is with you - you need only turn to him and ask to know his presence.”

There will be content shared on social media and the Church of England website with people talking about their Christmas journeys. Churches will be able to upload details of their Christmas services onto the revamped A Church Near You website (www.achurchnearyou.com).

Also available will be a series of short reflections throughout December and into early January 2018, introduced by Archbishop Justin. The reflections have been written for people who are new to faith and to help us all grow in our love of God.

The reflections can be received as text messages, emails, on social media and in a booklet produced by Church House Publishing, ideal for churches to give to those attending Advent and Christmas services.

Pray for the Church of England’s Christmas campaign, #GodWithUs and that more people will come to know the love of Jesus this Christmas-time.

Malvern Deanery - Rural Dean: David Nichol; Lay Chair: David Sparkes

Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane (Scotland): Bishop David Chillingworth

Diocese of Porvoo (Finland): Bishop Björn Vikström

Diocese of West Buganda (Uganda): Bishop Henry Katumba-Tamale

Mon 4 Churches Together in Malvern

Pray for all the Christian churches in the Malvern area as we work together with the local community - in schools projects (Lifepath, Open the Book, Seeds for Life, Spring into Life), with Malvern Hills Foodbank, in addressing issues of personal debt and access to financial services, and in extending a welcome to refugees. Chair: Dan Bennett.

Archbishop of South East Asia: Ng Moon Hing

with Assistant Bishops of West Malaysia: Charles Samuel and Jayson Selvaraj

Tue 5 St Andrew, Malvern

Give thanks for the growing work with children and young people and pray for appointments of a Youth Minister and Children & Families Ministry Leader in the coming weeks, to strengthen this work. Clergy: Dave Bruce, David Ritchie (Retd); Readers: Heather Williamson, Derham Cook, Barry Austin, Judith Keene, Jo Hartwright, Alice Bruce.

Diocese of Leeds: Bishop Nicholas Baines with Bishops Toby Howarth (Bradford), Jonathan Gibbs (Huddersfield), Paul Slater (Richmond), Tony Robinson (Wakefield)

Wed 6 Diocese of Morogoro

Give thanks for Bishop Godfrey’s engagement and marriage. Pray for him and for his new wife as she learns how to be “Mama Ascofu” - mother bishop - for the Diocese. Particularly remember the important role of the Mothers’ Union in the Diocese.

Diocese of Western Izon (Nigeria): Bishop Edafe Emamezi

Thur 7 All Saints, Malvern Wells & Wyche

Pray for our new monthly family-friendly afternoon service ‘Explore@4’ for fringe families in particular and to act as a stepping stone from Messy church and toddlers’ groups. Clergy: Dave Bruce, Paul Hunt (Retd); Readers: Peter Buchanan, Jacqui Green, Alice Bruce.

Diocese of Western Massachusetts (USA): Bishop Douglas Fisher

Fri 8 Christ Church, Malvern

Please pray for our regular congregation; for our outreach through concerts, community events, our schools and our Saturday book fairs. For ‘incumbent’ Archdeacon Robert, Associate Priest: Harold Goddard & and Chris Shepherd who takes our Family Services.

Diocese of Western Michigan (USA): Bishop Whayne Hougland

Sat 9 St Mary’s, Pickersleigh

Please pray for those in our parish who struggle with debt, particularly as Christmas approaches, and for CAB and 6Towns Credit Union in their work to help and support people. Clergy: Lynne Sparkes; Reader: Andy Noble; ALM: Chris Beale.

Diocese of Western Newfoundland (Canada): Bishop Percy Coffin
Christmas Tree Festivals

Christmas Tree Festivals are becoming an increasingly popular way of reaching out to the local community over Christmas. Different groups are invited to decorate a tree, with the church then open for people to come and have a look at the finished result!

Worcester Cathedral has an annual very impressive and popular display of more than 90 Christmas trees in the Cloisters. The Mayor of Worcester will officially open the festival and the trees will be displayed for four weeks for visitors to enjoy. This free event runs from 9 December to 4 January and is a great way to get into the festive spirit by visiting this celebration of the Christmas, with innovative tree designs from the many schools, businesses and charities that take part.

All Saints’ Church in Wribbenhall had a very successful festival last year, which they are repeating in 2017. The Church will be open from 10am until 4pm, 16-18 December and people can come in to vote for their favourite tree. The organisers said: "Our church will be full of Christmas trees depicting various Christmas themes. Entrance is free and last year the event proved very popular creating a lovely peaceful atmosphere."

St Mary and All Saints Church in Kidderminster are currently holding their first Christmas tree festival, which runs until 4 January. Churchwarden, Sue MacAskill, said: “It is hoped that groups from across the town will come together to promote themselves and also join in fellowship with each other, and that this will enable more people to engage with the church’s celebration of Christ’s birth.”

Please pray for all those organising Christmas Tree Festivals or other events to bring the community into our churches during Advent and Christmas.

Malvern Deanery - Rural Dean: David Nichol; Lay Chair: David Sparkes
Diocese of Western North Carolina (USA): Bishop José McLaughlin
Diocese of Chester: Bishop Peter Forster with Bishops Keith Sinclair (Birkenhead), Libby Lane (Stockport)
Diocese of Kuopio (Finland): Bishop Jari Jalkkonen

Mon 11 Malvern Link with Cowleigh
Give thanks and pray for this one parish with three places of community and worship (St Matthias, The Ascension & St Peter); for the continuing development of a common vision and our relationship with schools in the parish (St Matthias’, Northleigh, Somers Park, Dyson Perrins). Churchwardens, ALMs and clergy with PTO (Chris Copeland, Anthony Gann & Mary Nobles). Clergy: Sue Beverly; Readers: Joan Copeland, Eileen Tomlin, Mike Hancock.
Diocese of Wiawso (Ghana): Bishop Abraham Ackah

Tue 12 St Giles, Little Malvern Priory
Pray for volunteers supporting the church, for our link with Long Lartin High Security Prison and the Chaplaincy throughout the RAF Air Cadets. For our Advent series and our visitors, especially over Christmas. Clergy: Eric Knowles.
Diocese of Willochra (Australia): Bishop John Stead

Wed 13 The Protestant Church of Central Germany
After the recent elections, pray for those elected, and for the country’s response to a substantial share of the vote going to a far-right party. Pray the churches will contribute to creating a society that promotes mutual respect among all people. Help the country find healing and reconciliation after a divisive election.
Diocese of Windward Islands (West Indies): Bishop Calvert Friday

Thur 14 St Peter, Powick w. St James, Callow End
Pray for the appointment of a new Vicar for our Benefice, for our churchwardens and ALM Meg Allsopp. Readers: Rosemary Wells and Julia Davis.
Diocese of Wondurba (South Sudan): Bishop Matthew Peter

Fri 15 Guarlford & Madresfield w Newland
We give thanks for 150 years of ministry through the current church of St. Mary at Madresfield. Prayers are asked for Guarlford & Madresfield during this time of Vacancy that the right person will be appointed to lead us forward. Reader: Ros Davies.
Diocese of Worcester: Bishop John Inge, with Bishop Graham Usher (Dudley)
Diocese of Winchester: Bishop Tim Dakin with Bishops David Williams (Basingstoke), Jonathan Frost (Southampton)

Sat 16 Retired clergy in Malvern Deanery
Thanks be to God for the thriving community of retired clergy who are mutually supportive and are contributing much during a time of numerous vacancies.
Diocese of Wusasa (Nigeria): Bishop Ali Lamido
Pre-Christmas Drop-in in Redditch

Redditch Town Centre Chaplaincy is an initiative with local churches and Faith at Work in Worcestershire Workplace Chaplaincy. Each year it runs a ‘pre-Christmas, stress busting drop-in’ for retail workers in the Kingfisher Centre.

This provides a quiet space away from the Christmas rush, upon which shops depend, but which is the busiest and most stressful time for those working in them. Run for three days in the week before Christmas, the drop-in is supported and encouraged by the Centre’s management. A space away from the bustle is made available – sometimes in a vacant shop unit – and refreshments provided. For those unable to get away, even for 10 minutes, the team of chaplains and volunteers deliver hot drinks and mince pies. In 2016 more than 500 shop workers had contact with the drop-in, with more than 250 drinks served.

- Pray for this year’s drop-in, giving thanks for the many volunteers who help the regular chaplaincy team, that through this practical act of care and fellowship God’s love may be seen and experienced.
- Pray for the team of nine chaplains in their regular visiting through the year as they seek to get alongside those working in the shops and businesses of the town, and for similar initiatives in other towns.
- Pray for all who work in retail at this, their busiest time of the year. For those feeling exhausted and stressed; and those on temporary contracts not knowing whether their contract will be continued after the New Year.

Advent 3 Sunday 17 DECEMBER

Mon 18 Joy Tetley

Please pray for former Archdeacon of Worcester, Joy Tetley, as she celebrates 40 years of ordained ministry. Joy was ordained as a deaconess on 18 December 1977. Please pray for Joy, her husband Brian and all who will celebrate with her.

Diocese of Yambio (South Sudan): Bishop Peter Yacoub

Tue 19 Follow the Star in Kidderminster West

Please pray for Kidderminster West Team reaching out to the community with “Follow the Star” – a wide variety of activities from Advent to Epiphany, based around the star which guided the Magi, finishing with “Starfest” on January 6th.

Archbishop of Myanmar: Stephen Than Myint Oo with Assistant Bishop of Yangon (Myanmar): Bishop Samuel Htang Oak

Wed 20 Economy and Daily Life

Pray for those for whom the holiday period is a time of working away from family, such as in hospitals, airports and airlines, the armed forces, shipping and the emergency services. Pray that all may know God’s presence whatever they do, and wherever they are.

Diocese of Yei (South Sudan): Bishop Hilary Adeba

Thur 21 Winter Solstice

Today is the shortest day of the year. As the days grow gradually longer, let us give thanks for both daytime and night-time and pray for those who find the darkest days of winter particularly difficult, may they know that Spring is just around the corner.

Diocese of Yewa (form. Egbado) (Nigeria): Bishop Michael Oluwarohunbi

Fri 22 Those in care homes

Please pray for all those who live in care homes across the Diocese and for their friends and family who visit. Pray also for those who work in care homes, that they may find God’s love and support in what is often a very challenging occupation.

Diocese of Yirol (South Sudan): Bishop David Akau with Aluakluak Area Bishop: Isaac Aleth and Nyang Area Bishop: Paul Lual

Sat 23 Shop workers

Pray for shop-workers who have been working hard and will be at work until close of business on Christmas Eve. Pray too for those who will be back at work for the sales from Boxing Day onwards. May they and their families find time to remember and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, and may we not be diverted by the commercial focus.

Diocese of Yokohama (Japan): Bishop Laurence Yutaka Minabe
Kidderminster Advent windows

Calling Young Disciples Mission Enabler, Adam Legge has been working with a team of volunteers from Kidderminster East in the run up to Christmas to put together a series of Advent themed pop up displays in the windows of houses around Chaddesley Corbett.

The windows tell the Christmas story and have been counting down to the big day. Each window was designed by a different person, based on a separate part of the Christmas story. They started with the prophecies and ended with the visit of the wise men.

Adam said: “Each night one of the windows was set out so that people could find it on their walk around the village.

“I have seen similar projects before and really felt that it would combine the revealing spirit of an Advent calendar with a local community feel.”

Please pray that these window displays have helped people to think about God’s love at Christmas and will point people towards the churches’ festive services.

Christmas Eve Sunday 24 DECEMBER

Mon 25 Christmas Day

Eternal God, in the stillness of this night you sent your almighty Word to pierce the world’s darkness with the light of salvation: Give to the earth the peace that we long for and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Common Worship, Church of England

Diocese of York: Archbishop John Sentamu with Bishops Glyn Webster (Beverley), Alison White (Hull), John Bromilow Thomson (Selby), Paul Ferguson (Whitby)

Tue 26 Boxing Day

Pray for those who don’t have a home at Christmas time. Being homeless is particularly difficult when the weather is bad and all around are enjoying Christmas cheer. Pray for those who run shelters and day centres to help this group.

Diocese of Ysabel (Melanesia): The Revd Ellison Quity

Wed 27 Diocese of Peru

Give thanks for CMS Mission Partners Paul and Sarah Tester and Anna Sims, and the work they have been doing on discipleship work. Pray for Bishop Jorge and the Diocese as they look at improving ministerial training and formation.

Diocese of Yukon (Canada): Bishop Larry Robertson

Thur 28 Holy Innocents

Pray for families for whom this Christmas is a painful time. For parents who have lost sons or daughters, couples who are no longer together, children who are unhappy, confused or in trouble, and those who will be alone.

Diocese of Zaki-Biam (Nigeria): Bishop Benjamin Vager

Sat 30 Peace

Pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict and ask that God may bring peace. For the service men and women who have died in the violence of war and for those currently serving in war zones as well as their family, friends and all who pray for their safe return. For civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror.

Diocese of Zaria (Nigeria): Bishop Cornelius Bello
Diocese of Zonkwa (Nigeria): Bishop Jacob Kwashi

Stourport Deanery – Rural Dean: Mark Turner; Lay Chair: Andrew Quinn
Diocease of Yola (Nigeria): Bishop Markus Ibrahm
Diocease of Oslo (Norway): Bishop Ole Kvarme
Diocease of Durham: Bishop Paul Butler with Bishop Mark Bryant (Jarrow)
Diocease of Moray Ross & Caithness (Scotland): Bishop Mark Strange
New Year

As we approach 2018, we give thanks for everything that churches have done in the past year to bring God’s love and light to their communities.

At the turn of the year, pray particularly for those who can see no hope in the future. Pray that they will feel God’s love and presence alongside them.

Stourport Deanery – Rural Dean: Mark Turner; Lay Chair: Andrew Quinn
Diocese of Zululand (Southern Africa); Bishop Monument Makanya

Mon 1 JANUARY 2018 | New Year’s Day
Give thanks for the New Year and for all the potential it holds. Pray that God will kindle in us a mighty flame so that many more may know the love and wonder of God.

Tue 2 | Stourport Deanery
Pray for the Deanery Clergy and Vikki Day, Lay Mission Developer, particularly as she trains for Reader Ministry. For us all as we grow our spiritual and prayer life as a deanery. Rural Dean: Mark Turner, Lay Chair: Andrew Quinn.

Wed 3 | Diocese of Morogoro
Give thanks for the life and ministry of Morogoro Cathedral, and the community gathered around the Anglican compound in the heart of the city. Pray for the new Sub-Dean, and Diocesan Link Officer, Peter Mkengi, and the renewed energy he is bringing to our diocesan link.

Thur 4 | St Michael, Stourport
Pray as we move forward together with our new Vicar. For those who have been working hard for a long time including our Churchwardens (Liz & Roger), Readers and others in different ministry roles of ministry, including retired priest Paul Brothwell and Self-Supporting Minister Stephen Winter. Clergy: Carey Saleh; Readers: Richard Standing and Sandra Baty.

Fri 5 | All Saints Wilden
Pray for us as we learn together with our new Vicar. For those who have been working hard including Churchwarden Pam Craven and Lay Chair of the PCC Chris Tompkin. For Wilden CE Primary School, Head: Francesca Fishwick. Clergy: Carey Saleh.

Sat 6 | Areley Kings & Astley
Pray for St Bartholomew’s CE Primary, Head: Sue Helps and Astley CE Primary, Exec Head: Simon Stubbs, Head: Alison Reakes-Williams. For the continuing Fresh Expressions Church on the Walshes estate & Messy Church at St Bartholomew’s. For the building up of our relationships with the school communities. Clergy: Mark Turner, Josie Callam, Paul Brothwell (retired); Readers: Sue Matthews, Julia Quinn.
Plough Sunday

The observance of Plough Sunday on the First Sunday of Epiphany goes back to Victorian times, but behind it there is a much older observance, associated with the first working day after the twelve days of Christmas, hence ‘Plough Monday’ in some places. In medieval times some ploughs were kept in the parish church, and some churches kept a ‘plough-light’. In days when work was scarce in winter, the observance looked forward to the time of sowing with the promise of a harvest to come.

Although the nature of farming has changed over the centuries, Plough Sunday is seen as a way of generally celebrating farming and the work of farmers. Some church communities have also reintroduced it as a focus for asking a blessing on human labour near the start of the calendar year. It is an opportunity to cherish the land and human labour, and to remind us all of our dependence upon it and upon God.

Plough Sunday Prayer:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
for in your abundant care you have given us fertile land, rich soil, the seasons in their courses.
You provide seed for sowing, water, light and warmth to bring forth the miracle of growth.
You give us skill to work the land, to prepare and nourish it, that it may be fruitful.
By your blessing, let this plough be a sign of all that you promise to us.
Prosper the work of our hands, and provide abundant crops for your people to share.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
God speed the plough.

Stourport Deanery – Rural Dean: Mark Turner; Lay Chair: Andrew Quinn
Ministerial Experience Scheme

Jonathan Fleury, Melissa Drinkwater and Peter Owen have moved into a vicarage in Dudley for a year to gain an understanding of what being a vicar might involve as they explore a call to ordination.

Melissa Drinkwater is originally from West Sussex, but has recently graduated from Regent’s Theological College in Malvern. She is working alongside the Revd David Hoskin in Brierley Hill. She said: “I’d like to clarify my calling to see whether becoming an Anglican Vicar is where God wants me to be. I’ve already experienced so much and hope I can be a real help in the parish as well as provide prayerful encouragement.”

Jonathan Fleury was attending St Peter’s Church in Inkberrow before being placed with the Revd Mike Rutter in Netherton. He said: “This will be a great opportunity to gain practical experience and really test my vocation. I also hope that I can help in the parish by bringing a newcomer’s perspective on some of the things they’ve been doing.”

Originally from Hertfordshire, Peter Owen has also recently graduated from Regent’s College and is working with the Revd Tom Atfield as part of the Dudley Team. He said: “I’m looking forward to working with churches with different expressions of worship to those I am used to and learning from them and from Tom.”

Melissa, Jonathan and Peter all pray together daily and are undertaking some theological and ministerial study at the Queen’s Foundation in Birmingham as well as through the Diocesan Growing Leaders course. They spend four days a week in their parishes, where they shadow the clergy and have an opportunity to gain a range of experiences.

Please pray for Melissa, Jonathan and Peter and for the parishes in which they are placed.
**Epiphany 3**

**Sunday 21 JANUARY**

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

This year’s week of prayer for Christian Unity runs from 18 – 25 January.

Praying for the unity of the Church involves a recognition not only of the brokenness of Christian relationships but also how injustice in the world at large separates Christian communities and impedes our participation in God’s mission. History too plays a part, casting a shadow over how we live our lives together in community.

All of these issues emerge from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials for 2018. The churches of the Caribbean region describe their own context, how the hand of God was active in ending slavery, and how God’s mission in the world is a call to us all to unite together in ending injustice, that which casts a shadow from the past and current forms of injustice such as poverty, trafficking and discrimination.

This particular Caribbean experience is a challenge to us in our context to reflect more deeply on the injustices in our own nations in Britain and Ireland which create the divisions that impede our participation in God’s mission, with the call to actively work to end all division.

**That All May Be Free**

*Barrier-breaking God,*
*You embrace all cultures and lands,*
*But keep a special place in your heart*
*For the stranger, the widow and the orphan.*
*Grant us the gift of your Spirit*
*That we may become as You are,*
*Welcoming all as brothers and sisters,*
*Your cherished children,*
*Citizens together in Christ’s kingdom of justice and peace.*
*Amen*

*Stourport Deanery – Rural Dean: Mark Turner; Lay Chair: Andrew Quinn*
Homeless Sunday

Organised by Housing Justice, Homeless Sunday is a chance for Churches and Christian groups from across the country join together to pray, reflect and plan practical action on homelessness but also for a united Christian voice to offer solidarity and be a prophetic voice for change.

Homelessness in England is rapidly rising. Being homeless carries significant personal risk; on average, homeless people die at 47, far below the UK life expectancy of 81 years. A homeless rough sleeper is 35 times more likely to attempt suicide than a someone who has never faced homelessness, 13 times more likely to be a victim of violent crime and 47 times more likely to be a victim of theft.

Impossible to measure, there are also some indicators to the scale of hidden homelessness – estimates suggest nearly one in four households have a resident residing in a household against their preference due to lack of other options. 150,000 young people approached their local authority due to housing crisis in the last year. Of these, 26,000 were registered homelessness, yet 50,000 were turned away unsupported.

Housing Justice Church and Community Night Shelters offer food and shelter to those who would otherwise be sleeping rough, rotating responsibility between churches one night at a time. In the past year, as the network continues to grow, the number of guests hosted has increased by 1,100 across the winter season.

Please pray for all those who are homeless and for those who work to support them.

Find out more about Homeless Sunday at www.housingjustice.org.uk/Event/homeless-sunday-2018

Martley and Worcester West Deanery – Rural Dean: David Sherwin; Lay Chair: John Chidlow
During 2017, the national Digital Communications team at Church House in London produced a report on how to get the most from a new A Church Near You website. They spoke to 1,800 people across the country to gather insights and thoughts on how to make the service much better for a site that receives over 13 million page views each year.

As a result of this research, a new site was launched in November. Changes include:

- Churches are now able to add extra information to events and services, such as a location other than the church, times, accessibility and contact details.
- Space to include information about the facilities the church has, from a post office to foodbank or Alpha.
- The ability for churches to see the number of page views their profile gets each week, month and year.
- Users don’t just need to search for their nearest church or Church of England school, but can filter the search to show results that include the features and facilities they’re looking for, such as accessibility, car parking or service type.

In phase two, churches will be able to turn their simple page into a full church website, giving parishes the chance the make the most of this well-used website.

Please pray for all those who work to keep our churches online presence relevant, up to date and looking good, demonstrating a welcoming presence for those who are looking for a church or to find out more about faith.

Martley and Worcester West Deanery – Rural Dean: David Sherwin; Lay Chair: John Chidlow

Mon 5  Christ Church, Lower Broadheath
We give thanks for our unity and witness in our community. We pray that God will continue to bless the relationship with our school. Clergy: vacant; Reader: Barbara Beard.

Tue 6  St Clement w St David, Worcester
Please pray for our outreach into the local community. For all who help with and attend our coffee mornings and pastoral teas. For all our ALMs. Clergy: Phil Bradford, Sarah Cottrill.

Wed 7  Diocese of Morogoro
Berega Hospital is the biggest social mission in the Diocese. Pray for Isaac Mugeo, the hospital director, as he wrestles with the problems created by delayed government funding for salaries. Give thanks for the many patients who are treated there, and pray for the ongoing health education work that is provided.

Thur 8  St Michael, Dines Green
Please pray for the monthly lunches and for our engagement with the local community, especially with Dines Green Primary School and the work of the Green Centre. Clergy: Phil Bradford, Sarah Cottrill.

Fri 9  St John in Bedwardine, Worcester
Please pray for our engagement with the local community, especially through the parish breakfasts and the various occasions organised by the hard work of our Events Team. Clergy: Phil Bradford, Sarah Cottrill.

Sat 10  St Thomas, Crown East & Rushwick
Pray for the faithful congregation of St Thomas, Crown East, and the community of Rushwick which it serves, including the increasing size of the primary school. Clergy: Anne Potter, David Sherwin, Jennifer Whittaker, Ruth Wintle, Becky Elliot.
Toddler Praise in Stourbridge

Calling Young Disciples Mission Enabler, Anne Batchelor, has been working with the parish of St. Thomas, Stourbridge to develop a new monthly ‘Toddler Praise’ service.

Anne said: “After attending the Baptism Matters training, the church realised that we needed to better connect with our baptism families. In the baptism service, the church makes the promise to nurture the children in faith and we wanted to honour that. Unfortunately we don’t have the volunteers to do a weekly toddler group, but something monthly was definitely achievable.”

Anne is working with five volunteers from the church to ensure the service remains sustainable. The session runs for an hour at 1.45pm so that families can come before they collect any older children from school.

Vicar of St Thomas, Andrew Sillis, said: “Our Toddler Praise is a very simple format – there’s a chance for the toddlers to play and their carers to socialise, a short time of prayer and singing with a bible story and the session is finished with tea, juice and snacks. Our hope is that it connects with the spiritual needs of families with young children leading to a longer relationship to the church.”

All the songs used at the service are based on the tunes of well-known nursery rhymes so they are familiar to children and parents and the bible story is told in a Godly Play style. Natasha was one of the Mums to come to the first session with her children. She said: “I was given a flyer at nursery and it seemed like a good place to bring both my children to give them the opportunity to find out about faith.”

Please pray for Toddler Praise in Stourbridge and for all our churches our doing to reach parents with young children.

Mon 12 Retired Clergy in Martley & Worcester West

We offer our prayer of thanksgiving for those who have chosen to retire and continue to serve in this Deanery. We remember those who would wish to do more but the constraints of age and disability restrict them.

Tue 13 The Protestant Church of Central Germany

Pray especially for the young people in our partner parishes, that they may be inspired by the ecumenical and international links. Pray for the youth workers, and for those who support young people, that this side of the partnership may develop, and draw more young people into participation and mutual learning and co-operation.

Wed 14 Ash Wednesday

Almighty God, create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.

Thur 15 Archdeacons & Office

Pray for the Archdeacon of Worcester, Robert Jones, and the Archdeacon of Dudley, Nikki Groarke, along with their secretary Kathy Jones. Give thanks for all that they do and give in the life of our Diocese.

Fri 16 Diocesan Education Team

Pray for all those who work in the Diocesan Education Team. For Director of Education, Margaret James; Deputy Director of Education, Tim Reid; Executive Officer, Gilly Maxim; and Administrators Toni Enefer and Laura Farmer. For Claire Davies CEO of the Diocesan Multi Academy Trust; Claire Roberts, Academy Support Officer and for the team of consultants who support their work.

Sat 17 Those facing persecution

Pray for all those who are facing persecution in their own counties. Remembering particularly those in Syria and Iraq.

Martley and Worcester West Deanery – Rural Dean: David Sherwin; Lay Chair: John Chidlow
Racial Justice Sunday

The Methodist Church has celebrated Racial Justice Sunday (RJS) since 1989. In 1995 RJS became an ecumenical event celebrated in Britain and Ireland and this year it moves to the second Sunday in February.

The organisers say:
“We believe that the universe was created by a loving God who chose to become a human being in Jesus Christ, who has redeemed the world and sent the Holy Spirit to enable us to love one another with God’s love. All human beings are equally children of God and loved by God. Since none is outside the love of God, none should be outside our love either.

“We believe that the diversity of the human race was no mistake on God’s part. God deliberately created variety within the human family and wants us to take as much delight in that variety as God does.

“But racism persists in Britain and Ireland. At its most obvious and brutal, it takes the form of physical attacks. But it takes many other forms as well, like discrimination within the police force, popular prejudice against Travellers or people seeking asylum, or reluctance to accept people of a different ethnic or cultural group as neighbours. Even within churches, people can face discrimination and unkindness because they are different from the majority in a particular community.

“As long as this continues, we believe that it is important to make time to give thanks for our diversity and to pray for God’s help in overcoming our prejudices and the injustices that reflect and reinforce them.”

Pray for all who face racial discrimination in our society.

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