

Monday 30 March – Sunday 5 April

## **Personal Meditation & Worship**

*“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” [1 Corinthians 11:26]*

Jesus very often spoke symbolically to bring forth spiritual truth, for example the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. In our scripture it is recorded that on the night he was betrayed he was speaking directly to his disciples and brought forth spiritual truth. Never minimize the importance of the Breaking of Bread – this is something that as Christians, whatever our tradition that we do on a regular basis. For you it might be every week or once a month but this is something we should do out of reverence and worship not out of tradition and habit. I am sure that many of us will break bread this Easter time and as you take the bread and the wine I ask you to consider three simple but astounding truths.

This week reflect on the following and turn your thoughts into prayer and praise:

### **1. He died for us**

When Jesus died on that cruel Roman cross he fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the atonement. He was the One who was scourged, spat upon and ridiculed. He was the one who was stripped and vilified. Think on the sacrifice, the terror, the wickedness of the barbaric act that saw the Lamb of God hoisted on that evil instrument of torture and death for you and for me.

### **2. He arose from the grave**

I have had the privilege of going to Israel on three occasions and look forward to going again later in the year. I have been in the Garden tomb and stood within that tomb. Nobody knows whether that was the place that Jesus was laid but even so it still makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck when you stand in that place and see on the door of the tomb: “He is not here. He is risen.” Make no mistake Jesus rose from the grave and in doing that he defeated death and hell and made a way for you and for me. There is no other way!

### **3. He is coming again**

When He comes back every eye shall see Him. He will come back for His church and the reality is if you are not part of that throng you will be separated forever from God. The only way to guarantee your future is to bow the knee, confess your sins and believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. If you do know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, I urge you when you join in the simple act of remembrance that is Breaking of Bread to rejoice in your present but even more so in your future.

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: 1 Peter 2:23–25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 –18; Revelation 1:7, 17–18*

Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

# Monday 6 – Sunday 12 April

## Easter

*Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, so they went in; but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They stood there puzzled about this, when suddenly two men in bright shining clothes stood by them. Full of fear, the women bowed down to the ground, as the men said to them, "Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here; he has been raised."* [Luke 24: 1–6 GNB]

For many Easter is a holiday without real meaning; a DIY extravaganza, an excuse to overindulge in chocolate eggs or just take a break from School or work.

For Christians though it is a magnificent celebration of the heart of our salvation story.

1. Pray for your christian friends, your fellow church goers that we might truly celebrate the meaning of this great festival
2. Pray that the life of Christ be seen in your own life
3. Take time out this week to seek again the risen Lord Jesus for yourself
4. Pray that those who encounter christian people or church activities during this period will also encounter the living Christ
5. Pray that the activities of your church, services or special events to mark this Easter period will clearly declare the wonder and reality of Easter
6. Pray for the Passion Play being enacted in Church Square by St Marks Church in conjunction with SHINE on Saturday 11th April ; that it will be an experience that draws people closer to Jesus
7. Pray for all those attending church services over this Easter time to be renewed spiritually, as they receive forgiveness and newness of life through the love and power of Christ's death and resurrection.

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: John 19 & 20; Psalm 16:8–11; Psalm 22; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4*

Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

Monday 13 – Sunday 19 April

## **Parents, Families & Children**

### **Parenting Courses**

Ten-week courses run in term-time in St. Helens in schools, Children's Centres and community venues. There are many complex needs in the families accessing the courses.

Please pray for:

- Parents who completed courses at the end of March that they will continue to use new strategies in handling children's behaviour
- Parents who have found support and strength in meeting together that they will build on what they have learnt and grow stronger as a family
- New courses beginning after Easter, that the right people will attend and be able to complete all the sessions
- Tutors - for wisdom in responding to complex needs and creative ideas to help parents build respect and love into their relationships with their children and teenagers

### **Families**

We are living in times when family breakdown is on the increase and domestic violence and other forms of abuse is a reality in the lives of many families in our town.

Please pray for:

- All agencies working with families living in abusive situations
- Courage for victims of violence and abuse to seek professional help
- Counsellors working with adults and children who are living in fear of abuse of all kinds
- Teachers who have to discern and deal sensitively with children who are experiencing abuse
- The unconditional love of God to be shown to all those who have no experience of such love or even know there is a loving God who cares deeply for them

Family relationships are so important in God's eyes that St. Paul says:

*"If anyone does not take care of his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* [1 Timothy 5:8]

### **St Peter's Kid's Club**

Praise the Lord for:

- The growing numbers of children attending
- A new helper
- The parents who stay for a cup of tea or coffee and chat in the back hall whilst the children are at the club

Pray:

- We would be able to build on the foundations that we have
- Strengthening of relationships

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: Psalm 78:1–7; Colossians 3:18–21*  
Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

# Monday 20 – Sunday 26 April

## Youth & Schools Ministries

### Youth Aflame

St Helens Festival 4 & 5 July:

Please pray:

- God's favour as we raise funds
- Wisdom as we plan and prepare
- God's presence and power to be evident at the festival
- That we find bands, & speakers, who will communicate the gospel and love of God to everyone at the festival
- That God's Kingdom will be advanced in St Helens
- Please also pray that the young people of St Helens will be open to God & that we will demonstrate an alternative way of life through our relationship with Jesus.

### Seedlings Trust

Please pray for:

1. Sta's4all - our new Sunday family time at St.Aidans, Billinge in the School on the fourth Sunday of each month. There will be a mix of activities, songs, story and loads of tea, coffee and cakes. This is a new expression of church in the community reaching out to parents and children alike. It runs from 10.30am until approx 11.45am and all children and parents are welcome.
2. Outreach in Eccleston - at Eccleston Mere School from April 27th for 5 nights (7pm – 8.30pm) - the last night will be a Family Celebration. The theme is ROCKY'S – we shall look at the life of Peter and have loads of fun singing, working in various activities, listening and looking at Rocky's life. For more information contact either Christ Church Eccleston or Seedlings on 01744 604936.
3. An after school club at Parish Church School from 3.30pm – 4.45pm, week beginning May18th. The Thursday will be a Family Celebration. The theme is Sonseekers - people who chased after God.
4. For all the Trustees who oversee the work of Seedlings –
  - Sue Kirkham (Chair) from Christ Church, Eccleston
  - Richard Denno (Treasurer) from St.Marks, Haydock
  - Mike Balmford and Sylvia Gleave from CLC
  - Carol Burrows from Lowe House
  - Tracey Reeve from Sutton Village Church
  - Janice Smith from Trinity Church, Rainhill
  - Rev M.Thorpe from St.Phillips, Westbrook
5. Future planning for Schools in the St.Helens Area, as May is the time we look at the diary for Autumn Term.
6. For all the Schools, as they are so open to letting me in to share the Good News of Jesus

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: 1 Timothy 4:9–16; 2 Timothy 4:1–5*  
Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

Monday 27 April – Sunday 3 May

## St Helens Borough

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” [Jeremiah 29:11]*

Pray for:

1. The European elections in June.
2. The new Mayor, Councillor Terry Shields, who takes office on Wednesday 20th May.
3. Our Council and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) as they work to reach the targets of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in the following areas:
  - a. Economic Development & Enterprise (*John Draycott*)
  - b. Healthier Communities & Older People (*Marian Kerry*)
  - c. Communities & Neighbourhoods (*Angela Metcalfe*)
  - d. Children & Young People (*Mike Balmford*)
  - e. Safer Communities (*Tim Hyde*)
  - f. Praise God that the vacancies on the LSP sub-groups for faith representatives have now been filled (*a – e above*)
4. The large projects the Council is leading:
  - a. The rebuilding of all our secondary schools, over a period of five years.
  - b. The new Saints Stadium which is on track to start construction later this year.
  - c. Pray these will create jobs for local people.
5. All local businesses as they try to weather the current economic downturn.
6. Our school leavers and graduates that they can be helped to find employment.
7. Voluntary Organisations
  - a. Those working in the community who are struggling to find funding for their projects
  - b. Those working with the most vulnerable in society; homeless, disabled, elderly people; young people who are not currently in education, employment or training
  - c. Churches and church-based organisations offering services to community groups

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: Joshua 1:6–9; Isaiah 55:6–13; Colossians 4:2–6*

Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

Monday 4 – Sunday 10 May

## **Personal Meditation & Worship**

### **Hearts that burn in the presence of Jesus**

*'And they said to one another, "were not our hearts burning while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the Scriptures to us." [Luke 24:32]*

Two men took a seven mile journey and were changed. It wasn't the journey that changed them; it was a conversation with Jesus on that journey. As Jesus spoke to these men, their minds were not warmed, but their hearts were burning. Many people still do not let Jesus join their journey through life, they may talk about him, but not allow him to join them. Oh how I wish they would!

I wonder if you have ever experienced a burning in your heart. I am not talking about the kind you need *Gaviscon* for, rather the burning within that begins when God reveals something so wonderful to you that the very core of your being is enflamed with awe.

### **Reflection**

- What Scriptures have you been reading recently?
- Reflect on these Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart about it.
- Take time to listen and perhaps write down anything he is saying.

Thank the Father for wanting to reveal transforming truth to his church, and that he does not want to fill us with head knowledge but set our hearts ablaze. Thank him for wanting to be with us on our journey in life.

Throughout this week allow Jesus to break into your conversations, remember to pray not just in the 'closet' but on your journey throughout the day. Jesus is waiting to reveal himself. And he can do it any moment of any day if we just welcome him to join us on the journey. And once you get the fire... let it spread!

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to walk with me in my life, help me to be more aware that you are here with me, please open up the Scriptures to me and set my heart on fire. Fill me with your Holy Spirit that I might be a witness for you.  
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: Mark 1:16–20; John 14:15–21, 25–27*  
Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

Monday 11 – Sunday 17 May

## Law And Order

*“If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and **live in safety in your land**. I will grant **peace in the land**, and you will lie down and **no one will make you afraid**. I will remove savage beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country.”*

[Leviticus 26: 3 – 6]

1. Pray about gun and knife crime. Pray about the issue of domestic violence, which represents 25% of recorded violent crime – particularly as people begin to feel the pressure financially the stress on relationships will increase.

*[TFH Prayer Bulletin [www.tfh.org.uk](http://www.tfh.org.uk)]*

2. Restorative Justice (RJ) gives victims who want it the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their offending. It gives offenders the chance to apologise and turn their lives around. It is used in the criminal justice setting, and also by those dealing with conflict in schools, workplaces, the community and prisons.

*Lord, You are the Judge of all the earth, a holy God who will one day judge us all. We praise You that through Christ’s sacrifice for our sins on the cross we can receive Your total forgiveness and be renewed by Your Spirit. Amen.*

3. Ask God to grant wisdom and insight to professional and trained volunteers working to utilise RJ to solve problems in local communities. Pray especially that any Christians involved will demonstrate God’s uprightness, compassion and mercy to each individual.

4. Remember prison officers and others using RJ approaches to resolve inmates’ complaints and restore calm in volatile situations. Pray that as individuals face up to their responsibilities and think about the future they will be successfully rehabilitated.

*[CARE Prayer Bulletin [www.care.org.uk](http://www.care.org.uk)]*

5. Pray for **RIVERFORCE** – a *Fresh Expressions* Church-at-work initiative within Merseyside Police. Remember Peter Owens (a member of St Marks Haydock) as he heads this initiative. There are now four “cell” groups amongst the police on Merseyside

Their meetings cover three stages:

- i. **presence**, in which God's presence is recognised through worship;
- ii. **pressures**, in which members share and pray through concerns, whether domestic or work related;
- iii. **purpose**, during which they reflect on their roles as Christians in the force, both individually and collectively.

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: Psalm 28; Matthew 25:31–46; Luke 10:25–37*  
Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

# Monday 18 – Sunday 24 May

## St Helens Churches

*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves. [Psalm 127:1–2]*

### Pray:

- For the church in her weakness
- About the shortage of ministers, pastors and priests
- For the Holy Spirit to guide our ministers, priests and pastors and the body of Christ
- That we will be proclaimers and witnesses of the Good News

*I can do everything through him who gives me strength. [Philippians 4:13]*

### Pray for:

- God to strengthen his church to stand for truth, grace, love and compassion in these days of recession, job loss and financial difficulty
- The church to receive God's revelation of how to minister into the lives of needy people
- Christians to be bold in sharing the love of Jesus with others

*He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. [2 Corinthians 12:9–10]*

### Pray that:

- the Holy Spirit will strengthen every christian person in St Helens
- God's power would be seen in the way we treat others and speak to others
- the Holy Spirit will give us a spirit of unity, peace and brotherhood, that the people outside the Church will see what a difference he makes to our relationships

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: Acts 2:42–47; Acts 4:23–31*  
Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week

Monday 25 – 31 May

## Regional & National Issues

***Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth - he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.*** [Psalm 33:12–20]

### Nationally pray:

1. about what is now officially being called a recession.
2. for the Church to lead the way in repentance for the nation's abandoning of Christian values.
3. for Christian business people to speak out to the nation about Christian values in business and industry.
4. against the culture of debt that lies behind the economic problems of so many.

### Regionally pray:

5. into the area of crime. Pray for all positive initiatives against crime in the region. Pray for the initiatives that are linking the police and the Church, that there will be positive outcomes. Pray particularly for the "Redeeming Our Communities" event at the Echo Arena on 16<sup>th</sup> June designed to stimulate prayer and action into this area. [TFH Prayer Bulletin [www.tfh.org.uk](http://www.tfh.org.uk)]
6. Give thanks for the growing phenomenon of 'Business as Mission' where Christians set up businesses or give interest-free loans and advice leading to properly paid employment, training and a fresh sense of dignity and purpose to people in poverty. Pray that these initiatives will transform millions of lives.
7. Remember Stop the Traffik's campaign to persuade the multimillion-pound chocolate industry to sell only fairly traded cocoa products. Nearly half the world's chocolate is made from cocoa grown in the Ivory Coast, and an estimated 12,000 children have been trafficked into cocoa farms there. Please pray for them.
8. Remember those working to protect society from terrorist and criminal violence and ask God to show them the most effective ways of cooperating and sharing information. Pray for the UK's armed and police forces, intelligence services and others responsible for guarding our borders, preventing attack, and maintaining peace. [CARE Prayer Bulletin [www.care.org.uk](http://www.care.org.uk)]

*Other Scriptures for meditation and prayer: Psalm 144; Romans 13:1–7*

Use these verses to give you more ideas for praying this week