

Sunday 31 January – 6 February

Education

During these two months in our prayer diary, as well as focusing our prayers on weekly topics, we'll also be focusing our prayers on the Beatitudes. Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount with 'good news' for everyone – with a bias towards those who currently struggle in the world. These sayings show why the Kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed in his ministry, is good news for all. Yet it is no coincidence that during the same sermon, Jesus taught the people to pray 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven'. The kingdom, and the blessings that the kingdom brings – only comes when we pray specifically for the kingdom to come. And so each week we'll be using each line of the Beatitudes to help us to pray for the kingdom to come – particularly focusing on the area we live in.

Matthew 5:1-3 "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". (TNIV)

We live in a world with many pressures: Financial pressures, Social pressures, Family pressures and Political pressures. Increasingly people are struggling to cope with the pressures placed upon them. Perhaps you know someone who is struggling to cope at this time. Pray for them. And pray that they may have the courage to bring their burdens to God.

This Sunday (31st January) is Education Sunday – so this week we're going to specifically pray for those who work in our education system and for the role we as Christians and churches play within the education system.

A special prayer

"Lord our Teacher, we ask Your blessing on every Christian who has links with a school. Please give them wisdom and grace as they fulfil their roles as teachers, governors or board members, support staff, schools workers, pastoral teams, parents and students. Amen" (prayer taken from www.care.org.uk)

Paul Caine, from the Seedlings Trust, has asked us to pray for them as they work in schools across the borough. They have asked us particularly to pray for:

* Sta's4all – the monthly family service which runs every fourth Sunday of the month at St Aidan's School in Billinge which the Seedlings Trust have set up in conjunction with St Aidan's Church and the school. In particular:

- i.) Thank God for the continued growth in numbers of people who have never attended church before attending this group. Thank God that now between 80-100 people come each month.
- ii.) Pray that this venture may continue to grow and develop.
- iii.) Pray for wisdom for Paul and the people involved as they seek to develop this venture.
- iv.) Pray for protection for the team and the building as they continue to do God's work in this place.

* Please also pray for the Trustees of the Seedlings Trust – Sue Kirkham, Richard Denno, Sylvia Gleave, Janice Smith, Sarah Ridgeway, Tracey Reeve, Rev'd Martin Thorpe and Mike Balmford. Pray too that more new trustees may come forward.

* Pray for Paul as he leads a new initiative at the Parish School called Parish Praise. This is a half-termly after-school event which includes worship, stories and activities for the children who attend the school and their families. Please pray for the Parish Praise event this week (3rd February).

* Please pray for Paul as his book has just been sent to the publishers. Pray that the book will be well received.

Please also pray for:

* The many people across St Helens from our churches; both ministers and church members, who go into our local schools and lead acts of worship and work within the school.

* Pray particularly for the headteachers and senior staff of our local schools who are often under intense pressure as they take on the responsibility of running the school. Pray that they get the rest-times they need for the long hours that they do.

* Thank God for all our local schools and for the work they do with the children and young people of our borough.

Please pray for the town centre churches

31st January – Christian Life Centre and the Salvation Army Hostel

1st February – Barton Street Mission and Bethel Mission

2nd February – St Helens Baptist Church and Wesley Methodist Church

3rd February – Holy Cross and St Mary's Lowe House

4th February – St Helens United Reformed Church (Ormskirk Street)

5th February – St Helens Parish Church, St Mark's North Road and
St Thomas' Eccleston

6th February – Redeemed Church of God

Sunday 7 – 13 February

Marriage

Matthew 5:4 *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted"*. (TNIV)

I'm sure many of us have experienced the pain of losing someone. For some – that experience will be a very recent one. For others – the experience may have been years ago but the pain is still there. Perhaps you know of people who have lost loved ones and are still really struggling. Perhaps you yourself are the one who is mourning and who is still struggling. Pray for them, or for yourself. Pray that God through his Kingdom will bring comfort to those who mourn. Pray that God's hope may shine through the pain.

This week, as it is Valentine's Day coming up, is National Marriage Week (www.marriage-week.org.uk). The week is designed to promote the importance of marriage and raise awareness about marriage. So this week – let's pray about marriage.

A special prayer:

"Almighty God, thank You for ordaining the unique relationship of marriage. We pray that Marriage Week will prompt politicians and others who have positions of influence to reconsider the many benefits of marriage – both for individuals and for society as a whole. Amen." (prayer taken from www.care.org.uk)

Please pray for:

- * Thank God for your own marriage, or for the marriages of people in your family and those whom you know. Ask God to bless those marriages and to protect those marriages.
- * Pray for people who are getting married this year. Perhaps you know of people in your own family or friends who are getting married this year. Pray for them, that amidst all the planning and organisation that needs to be done – that those couples may find time for one another as they prepare to make such a commitment.
- * Pray for those people who are struggling with their marriage. Pray that God would be with them in their struggles and help them.
- * Pray for people who are in abusive relationships. Pray that they may find the help and support they need during such a difficult time.
- * Pray for people whose husbands/wives have died. Pray that God would comfort them.
- * Pray for those who are single, yet long to find love and companionship.

Please pray for the churches in Billinge, Blackbrook, Haresfinch and Carr Mill

7th February – Billinge Family Church

8th February – St Aidan's Billinge and St Mary's RC Church

9th February – St David's Carr Mill

10th February – St Patrick, Clinkham Wood and St Peter and St Paul RC Church

11th February – Haresfinch United Reformed Church

12th February – St Mary's Blackbrook

13th February – St Paul's Blackbrook

Sunday 14 – 20 February

The Local Church Part 1

Matthew 5:5 *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth”* (TNIV)

Do you know someone who has no self-confidence? Who feels like they are useless and have nothing to offer? Perhaps you yourself struggle with feelings of worthlessness. Many people in our society feel like this – yet to God they are worth everything. Pray for those people – pray that God would help them to realise their true worth.

This week our prayer focus is going to be on the local church. So this week let's take the time to pray for our local churches.

Janet Roberts from St Paul's Church, Blackbrook, has asked us to pray particularly for St Paul's. Please pray for:

- * For vision for our church council as they work on a mission plan.
- * For encouragement & enthusiasm for our children's leaders, especially for our midweek kids club, TJ's, on a Tuesday night.
- * For a sense of God at work in our midst even when things are tough.
- * For Gina & Mel training to be lay readers.
- * Please pray for the development of a lunchtime Christian club at our local school.

- * Thank God for our successful Christmas event: Operation Gabriel, where we drove a nativity float around the local area, knocked on doors with a card and chocolate and wished people a happy Christmas, which caused a happy stir around the parish.
- * Thank God for visitors who came to our Christmas services.
- * Thank God for His provision of our needs over the last year & our links with the world church.
- * Pray for Keir, a member of our congregation, as he plans to spend the summer in Uganda on a mission.

Philip Fell, from the Christian Life Centre, has asked us to pray particularly for CLC. Please pray for:

- * Pastor Adam James will leave us at the beginning of March to take up a pastorate in Yorkshire – please pray for him and his family as they prepare for the transition. Also pray for CLC as we adjust to life without him!
- * We are looking to starting some new outreaches this year in different parts of the town with a view to reaching people who do not currently attend any other church. Please pray for wisdom and a sense of God's leading in this.
- * Hope Centre continues to look for additional funding to sustain its work into the long-term. Funding is getting increasingly difficult to find in the current economic climate. Please pray for us as we hope to start a "Street Church" for homeless people at the 103 Homeless Centre on Church Street, where they will hear the gospel yet feel secure in an environment they are familiar with

Please also pray for:

- * The Rev. David Eastwood, who has been recently appointed to be the minister at the Parish Church. Pray for him as he settles down in St Helens and as he seeks to lead the Parish Church.
- * Please pray for the churches in our area who are without a minister. Pray for the people in those churches who have taken on added responsibilities in the running of those churches.

Please pray for the churches in Eccleston and Windle

- 14th February – Christ Church Eccleston and St Luke's Eccleston
- 15th February – Eccleston Methodist Church
- 16th February – St Julie's
- 17th February – St Andrew's
- 18th February – St Teresa's
- 19th February – Newtown United Reformed Church
- 20th February – St Thomas of Canterbury.

Sunday 21 – 27 February

Fairtrade

Matthew 5:6 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”*. (TNIV)

Despite what the secular media tell us, across our land there is a deep hunger and thirst to know God. People have got many questions. Let's pray that as Christians, and as

churches across our town and our land, that we may find ways to connect with people and fulfil their hunger and thirst for righteousness.

As we thirst for righteousness, this week is the start of Fairtrade fortnight. The Fairtrade movement seeks to provide a better deal for those who produce our food. Many producers, particularly in the third world, are not given a fair cut of the money which we pay for our food. The Fairtrade movement highlights this problem and works to try and give our producers a better deal.

**Judith Price, the Fairtrade Rep for St Helens, has asked us to pray for the Fairtrade Movement and for the local involvement within the movement.
Please pray for:**

- * The Fair Trade Fortnight (22 February – 7 March). This year the theme is ‘the BIG SWAP’ where people will be invited to swap their usual stuff for Fairtrade Stuff. Fair Trade is a win-win situation as we benefit from quality goods and producers are guaranteed a decent wage, good working conditions and fair prices. Pray that this fortnight will help to raise awareness and support for the movement.
- * Thank God that St Helens Council supports Fairtrade.
- * Pray for the Fair Trade Committee who work constantly to promote Fairtrade right across the Borough and in schools and maintain St Helens Status of being a Fair Trade Town.
- * Pray that the events the Council and Churches will be holding during Fair Trade Fortnight will be successful and it will inspire more individuals and businesses, to opt for Fairtrade where they can.
- * Pray that our world will become fairer and producers in the developing world will get a decent deal.

Please also pray for:

- * Our own local farmers in St Helens and local area, that they too get enough money to support themselves and that they too get a fair deal for the food that they produce.
- * Thank God for our farmers who work hard to provide our food.

Please pray for the churches in Haydock and Earlestown

21st February – Earlestown Baptist Church
22nd February – Blessed English Martyrs RC Church
23rd February – St James the Great, Haydock
24th February – St Mark’s Haydock
25th February – Christ Church United Reformed Church
26th February – Haydock Independent Methodist Church
27th February – Haydock Methodist Church

Sunday 28 February – 6 March

Children and Young People

Matthew 5:7 “*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*” (TNIV)

Think back through your life. Can you think of a time when someone helped you out? Maybe you’ve been in trouble and someone has come to your rescue. Maybe someone came in and did a job that needed doing in your house. Think of the person who helped

you – who showed mercy to you. Thank God for that person. And now ask God to help you to show mercy to someone else today.

This week we're focusing on praying for the children and young people of St Helens.

Youth Aflame have asked us to pray about the following:

Joe, Graham and Craig write...

* Thank you for continuing to support us and lift us up before the Lord in prayer. We have seen many young people attend our youth café at Parish church over the last four months, and also have our 2010 programme of outreach events to plan.

* Please pray for God's wisdom and vision from Him as we plan our events, venues, and areas to reach out to this year.

* For God's favour and a continuing good relationship with the Police and St Helens Council.

* For the development of our youth café. Pray again for wisdom as we look to develop the café and engage the young people with the gospel in a relevant way.

* Pray for our young people as they serve Youth Aflame with their talents, gifts and time again this year.

* Pray for all the young people we meet who do not yet know Jesus. Pray for relationships to be built, for openness, and trust.

* Declare revolution over the youth of St Helens that they will be moved from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light. This is a prayer in response to a word God gave us for the youth of our town we regularly declare Revolution over the young people of our town and would love you to join us.

* Pray against any work of the enemy this year as we feel God is breaking new ground with the youth of St Helens, and are not unaware of the battle we face.

* Join us in thanking and praising God for all he has done for us particularly for His favour, provision, protection, teaching and leading over the past year.

* Thanks again for all your prayers and support.

Please also give thanks for:

Thank God for all those in our locality who work with our children and young people; including voluntary groups, churches, community centres, sports clubs and the Council Youth Service. Thank God for the way in which they help our children and young people develop.

Please pray for the churches in Newton-Le-Willows

28th February – All Saints C of E Church and Emmanuel, Wargrave

1st March – Newton Christian Fellowship

2nd March – St David's RC Church and St Patrick's RC Church.

3rd March – St John's C of E Church

4th March – St Peter's C of E Church

5th March – St Mary and St John RC Church

6th March – Newton Methodist Church

Sunday 7 – 13 March

Local Issues

Matthew 5:8 *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”* (TNIV)

With many pressures in our lives, the temptations to ‘cut corners’ or ‘cheat’ have never been greater. We live in a society where it is becoming increasingly acceptable to bend the rules and look after ourselves. Perhaps this week you have been tempted to do this? This week, let’s pray that we remain pure in heart – and let’s set ourselves apart for God.

This week we’re focusing our prayers on praying for our locality.

Paul Johnson, Chaplain at St Helens College, has asked us to pray for:

* Please pray for St Helens College as we look to some new ideas for the start of 2010. As you will, no doubt, be aware; the Town Centre Campus is currently undergoing a major redevelopment. Phase 1 has been open since September and is now starting to settle down into being the world class facility that it was designed to be. As with any new house, there have been some snagging issues, but the estates team have been outstanding and the students and staff have shown real patience and professionalism. Phase 2 is well underway with the remaining sections of the old D block about to disappear into memories! Please do pray that the work will go to plan, that there will be no injuries on the building site and that the disruption will be kept to a minimum.

* Please pray for the work of the Chaplaincy Team. Paul Johnson is the Lead Chaplain and works in a full time capacity. Craig Lawrenson (CLC) is a volunteer Associate Chaplain who is on site for around 3-4 hours per week. Frank Hinds (St Marks and Liverpool Diocese) will be joining the team imminently and he will operate in a similar role as Craig. The next step, from a personnel perspective, will be to appoint members to the team from different faith groups. Please pray for wisdom for Paul as he looks to appoint the right people to the post of Associate Chaplain. The idea is to care for people, to show God's love in practical ways and to show that it is possible to fundamentally disagree on matters of faith but still not be disagreeable! We want to show the staff and students that we are confident enough in our own faith that we can share a platform with people who hold different beliefs, have them as good friends and yet not need to compromise on the truths that we hold dear.

* Please pray for the Chaplaincy Team as we offer the ‘Journeys’ course to staff in February and March. This will run on Tuesday lunchtimes at the Town Centre Campus. It will provide staff with the opportunity to explore their own beliefs and will give the team the chance to put forward the concepts of Christianity in a non threatening environment. Please pray that staff will come along, that the atmosphere will be good fun and that people will take steps on their journey toward God.

* Please pray for a small group of students who are exploring the idea of launching a Christian Union in College. This is a very difficult task, not least due to the absence of a set lunch break. Pray that the group will feel encouraged and that the venture will work well. The likelihood is that the group will carry out a ‘Faith Audit’, which involves surveying students over a two week period to discover what the general opinions of the student body are in relation to faith and belief. Pray that this will go well and that there will be some good conversations around the College as the profile of spirituality is lifted in people's thinking.

Please also pray for:

* Pray for St Helen’s Civic Leaders; for the Mayor Terry Shields, the leader of the Council Cllr Brian Spencer and the Chief Executive of the Council Carole Hudson. Pray that God would guide these people as they make important decisions for the borough.

* Pray for our MPs; for St Helens North MP Dave Watts, and for St Helens South MP Shaun Woodward. Pray for them as they seek to put forward our local concerns to our national Government.

* Pray for the Police in St Helens as they work to keep St Helens a safe place to live. Pray for Chief Superintendent Chris Armit as he oversees the work of the police in St Helens.

Please pray for the churches of Parr and Rainford

7th March – Holy Trinity, Parr Mount

8th March – Parr Methodist Church and the Salvation Army, Tickle Avenue

9th March – St Vincent de Paul RC Church

10th March – St Peter's Parr and St Philip's Derbyshire Hill

11th March – Corpus Christi RC Church, Rainford

12th March – All Saints Rainford

13th March – Rainford United Reformed Church and Rainford Methodist Church

Sunday 14 – 20 March

Families and Parenting

Matthew 5:9 *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”*
(TNIV)

When I was in Israel a few years ago I was speaking to a Jewish university lecturer. She was lamenting the fact that in Israel, many people in the Christian community there were emigrating. I was puzzled and asked why she was upset over this. She replied – because she saw that the indigenous Christian community there were the peacemakers and the key to peace in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Without going into the politics of the Israel debate – it was interesting that Christians were viewed as peacemakers in that land. Of course Christians haven't always strived for peace – yet if we are God's servants we should be peacemakers. Spend a moment reflecting on your life. Are you a peacemaker? Are there areas where you could be a peacemaker? Ask God today to help you bring peace to areas where there is difficulty.

As this Sunday (14th March) is Mothering Sunday, we use this week to pray particularly for families in St Helens.

A special prayer for mothers:

“Lord of all compassion and kindness, we remember women who find great fulfilment in their mothering roles. We pray too for those who need Your wisdom, patience and strength at this time because they are worried about their children. Amen” (prayer taken from www.care.org.uk)

Please pray for:

* Thank God for the many organisations and groups which help families in the Borough. Thank God for SureStart and the Children's Centres dotted around the Borough. Thank God for the work our local schools do with families. Thank God for our community centres which often run kids clubs and organise activities in the school holidays. Thank God for the work our local churches do too with families – thank God for the many playgroups, mother and toddler groups and kids clubs that are run in our churches.

* Pray for the single-mums, single-dads, and also other family members who have had to take on the responsibility of raising a child by themselves in our town. Pray that God would give them strength and that these people may find the help they need.

* As it is Mother's Day week, let's also pray for those mothers (and fathers) who have lost a child or have lost children and for whom this day brings much pain.

* Pray for those families where at the moment there is conflict and are close to breaking up. Pray that in those families – peace may eventually be found. Pray also for those families which have broken up and are separated. Pray that God would be with the members of those families who are living with the pain of separation.

Please pray for the churches of Prescot and Thatto Heath

14th March – Our Lady Help of Christians RC Church and St James', Eccleston Park

15th March – Prescot Methodist Church and Whiston Methodist Church

16th March – Prescot Salvation Army and Prescot Community Church

17th March – Balmer Street Methodist Church, Nutgrove Methodist Church and
West Street Independent Methodist Church

18th March – St John's Ravenhead and St Matthew's Thatto Heath

19th March – St Austin's

20th March – Toll Bar with Prescot United Reformed Church

Sunday 21 – 27 March

The Local Church Part 2

Matthew 5:10–12 *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you”* (TNIV)

In St Helens we are very fortunate that we are not persecuted for our faith. Yet in many countries around the world our Christian brothers and sisters face persecution, danger and even death because of their faith. Perhaps you know someone in another country who is persecuted for their faith, or you've visited a country where you yourself have had to be careful about demonstrating your faith. Pray for that person or country which comes to mind – pray that God will give them strength in the face of persecution.

This week, we focus our prayers again on the local church.

Trevor Prescott, from West St Independent Methodist Church, has asked us to pray for:

* West Street Independent Methodist Church will be holding its annual Fellowship Meal on March 26th when the after-dinner speaker will be the President of the Independent Methodist Connexion of Churches, Eric Southwick from Durham. Pray that the members of the local churches and the friends attending will enjoy a happy time of fellowship, and that the speaker will be used to bring a message which will inspire the committed and challenge the uncommitted.

* Please also pray for the combined work of the Thatto Heath Churches: Nutgrove Methodist, St Johns C. of E., Toll Bar U.R.C., and West Street Independent Methodist, at Reeve Court retirement village in 2010. Pray for the weekly non-denominational services and monthly communion services, that those who attend will feel a deeper

sense of being part of the local Christian community and be encouraged in their faith and in their witness to the other residents.

The Parr Team Churches (C of E), would like you to pray for:

Please pray for our churches as we are currently advertising for a student children's and youth worker to join us in September 2010. This is a new post so pray for God's guidance for us as we seek to appoint the right person.

Please also pray for:

- * For continued good relations between the churches of St Helens and that those relationships may be strengthened through this year.
- * Pray for SHINE, that SHINE may be a vehicle where churches can come together and encourage one another.
- * Pray for all our churches as we plan to celebrate Easter. Pray that the churches through all their services and events over Easter may be able to get across the Easter message to our communities.

Please pray for the churches of Sutton and Rainhill

21st March – All Saints Sutton, St Michael's Sutton and St Nicholas' Sutton

22nd March – Clock Face Methodist Church, Sutton Methodist Church and Sutton Village Church

23rd March – Church of the Nazarene and Peasley Cross United Reformed Church

24th March – St Ann & Blessed Dominic and St Theresa's.

25th March – St Bartholomew's RC Church and St Anne's Rainhill

26th March – Rainhill Pentecostal Church and Trinity Church, Rainhill

27th March – St James' Methodist Church, Rainhill

Church Prayer Requests

One of the goals of SHINE is to get churches to meet and pray for one another. As you will have noticed – we put individual church prayer requests into this diary so that we can pray for each other. In particular – if there are any specific events which your church is organising and you'd like pray for that event – then please e-mail us at office@shine.org.uk. The next prayer diary is our April/May edition – please e-mail us your prayer requests by Friday 5th March.
