

ST. GILES' PRAYER WEEK – MARCH 2019

PRAYING BOLDLY – FREQUENTLY – EXPECTANTLY

United In Prayer

Welcome to the St. Giles' Prayer Week notes for March 2019! Our monthly notes are intended to help you in your prayer life - to encourage you to spend more regular time with God, whether that's in a Prayer Triplet; in a Home Group meeting with a particular prayer focus during this 'Prayer Week' first week of the month; or individually. Do use them to help you wait on Him; listen to Him; and talk with Him – all of which are crucial to having a healthy prayer life.

When we seek - as a whole church - to go deeper together with Jesus Christ, prayer is at the heart of our discipleship journey. There's real spiritual power when we pray together in unity and agreement; these notes aim to help you to structure your prayer time well, with different themes & emphases each month, about which all of St. Giles' is praying together over the same time period.



Prayer Week starts each month with First Priority Prayer on the first Sunday evening – and on March 3rd, we're approaching the season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6th.

The development of Lent is something of a mystery, and scholars are divided on its origins. It clearly has very strong echoes of the time that Jesus spent alone in the wilderness after his baptism, fasting and praying to his Heavenly Father – and where, of course, he was also tempted three times by the devil. But we know, however, what we have now: a forty-day period of fasting, reflection and preparation for the celebration of Christ's passion, death and resurrection at Easter. So let's perhaps think of Lent as a series of spiritual exercises that help us to grow as fit and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

For us at St. Giles', this March is also the month at the end of which over one hundred and fifty of us will spend time together on our 2019 Church Weekend Away, at Hothorpe Hall – a significant couple of days in which we'll have the opportunity to grow together as the family of Jesus Christ, his church.

Prayer Triplets – if you are in one – or Home Groups, are great places in which we can be accountable to one another in our Christian lives. Lent is a really good time in which we can maybe start to challenge ourselves in how we are walking with Jesus day by day - our February Prayer Week notes therefore reflect below a particular emphasis on such Lenten themes.

Prayer Time Practicalities

Remember to “Pray as you can; not as you can't!” (Father Luigi Gioia) Make it as easy as possible, whether as a group or as an individual, to pray. Choose a time and place that works well for you.

Structuring Your Prayer Time

Try your best to pray for an hour, and start with the same 3 areas of prayer in the first 15 minutes:

PRAISE - Praise God for who He is, and so bring His presence into your praying (Psalm 63:3)

WAITING - Bring God's peace into our prayer time, and focus ourselves on Him (Psalm 46:10)

CONFESSION - Before we raise our prayers, we need to be right with God. (Psalm 139:23)

This pre-Lenten Prayer Week, spend each of the remaining 3 quarter-hours praying about these areas:

First Quarter-Hour: FOR SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN GIVE UP IN YOUR LIFE

If there's something that has become an idol in your life, whether it's a consumer item, a regular unhelpful practice or even an addiction, give this unhelpful thing over to God. Bring it to the foot of the Cross, and pray that He will help you to overcome it. We don't just give up idols for Lent, of course; we give them up to God for good. However, Lent's a very good starting point. And, if you're in a Home Group or Prayer Triplet, that's also a great place in which to support one another, & hold each other accountable, as we strive to walk more closely with God, without these unhelpful habits or things.

Second Quarter-Hour: FOR A POSITIVE THING TO INTRODUCE IN YOUR LIFE

Pray for God's guidance for a positive change that you can make in your life, starting this Lent, and for His help in enabling you to realise this. Take the opportunity to ask God what new blessing He can bring into your life; if you're in a Group, pray for this for each other, and encourage one another in it.

Third Quarter-Hour: FOR ST GILES' CHURCH WEEKEND AWAY, 29TH-31ST MARCH

Thank God that over 150 members of St. Giles' will be heading off on our Church Weekend Away. Pray that, as we seek to grow as individuals and as a community in our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another, we'll open our hearts to what God has to say for us. Pray for our speaker, Rev. Richard Wilson; for our worship & prayer; for the weekend's logistics; & for all the Hothorpe staff. And pray too for those who won't be joining the rest of us at Hothorpe, that they too will be part of a St. Giles-wide move to a greater understanding of what it means to live as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

And Finally....

There are lots of great Lent resources out there to help you pray; to do things differently in your day-to-day life; and to go more deeply with God. Why not try some of these suggestions:

40 Acts – encouraging you to do Lent as a time of radical generosity, not just spiritual discipline (<https://40acts.org.uk>) and including a fantastic family wallchart (<https://40acts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/40-Family-Wallchart-2019.pdf>)

Christian Aid – Follow their journey through Lent & put your faith into action in daily reflections & challenges (<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/count-your-blessings-2019-english-pdf>), with a children's equivalent (<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/childrens-count-your-blessings-2019>)

TearFund - Sign up for their Lent devotionals (email/booklet): https://www.tearfund.org/en/lent_2019/

Jane Williams - The Merciful Humility of God (ISBN 978-1472954817) - Lenten reflections.

...And look out for details very shortly of the **St. Giles' 24 Hours of Prayer on March 22nd & 23rd** - we'll be praying round the clock exactly one week before we head off on the Church Weekend Away.

And if you receive responses from God in answer to your prayers, please do let Tim or Lee know - we'd love to share testimonies with all of St. Giles', about what God's doing in our lives. Pray well!