



Reflection of the Month: Praying for God's kingdom to come



Rachel Farmer writes:

'Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done' ...these familiar words will hold many different memories and feelings for each of us.

I'm reminded of sitting cross-legged on the wooden floor of the biggest classroom in my Church of England Primary school in Kent. We would all chant the prayer together and most of the time I didn't give the meaning much thought.

Over the past few months while I've been working with the organising team for Thy Kingdom Come – the global wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost – the words have taken on new significance.

When we pray Thy Kingdom Come, what do we mean and what are we asking for? Of course it has many meanings. Talking about it in the context of the wave of prayer the Archbishop of Canterbury said, "It's impossible to exaggerate the life transforming power of the Lord's Prayer...It's famous enough to be spoken by billions in thousands of languages and yet it's intimate enough to draw us ever closer into friendship with Jesus Christ." When we ask for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done, I believe we can expect things to happen... and not just ordinary things. Transformation is pretty much guaranteed.

That's why the team at Thy Kingdom Come are calling on people to pledge2pray. But they don't want people to leave it there with a quick prayer. The call is to pray together and to pray specifically for people we know to hear God calling to them.

There are quite a few people living in the two roads around me who don't know Jesus Christ. But I know at least one of them is searching, because she told me, and I know two others who have questions. My prayer as part of Thy Kingdom Come will be for these three women to come to faith in Jesus Christ. And I'll also pray that I am able to be part of that. It's a big prayer and I don't know when or how it will be answered. I'm also going to pray for the Holy Spirit to give me the confidence to speak to them about God, at the right time and in the right way.

Prayer isn't all about asking for things and in that way Thy Kingdom Come isn't just about prayer in general. But it is about a specific prayer – prayers that ask for miracles of faith and extra special power in sharing the life-transforming love of God.

“When the day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place ... all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:1-4)

What might happen if churches across the United Kingdom and in other countries around the world, came together as one and prayed for God’s kingdom to come and for the Holy Spirit to help them be His witnesses? It’s an amazing thought. Will you and your church be part of this global wave of prayer? Will you commit to pray for people you know to come to know Jesus Christ and for the church to grow?

Prayer starts with you and with me - it’s personal. I believe God wants to get personal with each of us and I’m excited about what will happen this year as we join together to pray between 25 May and 4 June.

To find out more about Thy Kingdom Come and how you, your family and your church can take part see: <https://www.thykingdomcome.global>

[CTE web page with more information](#)

Rachel Farmer is a writer and communication specialist working part-time with ‘Thy Kingdom Come’. Her first book ‘I married a Soldier’ is published this summer with Lion-Hudson. She blogs <https://rachelreay.wordpress.com> about life as an army wife.

Presidents respond to Westminster terrorist attack

The [Presidents](#) of Churches Together in England express sincere condolences to the bereaved families and friends of those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack that was perpetrated in Westminster yesterday, Wednesday 22 March 2017.

The Presidents pray for the healing of those injured, and for the wellbeing of our society in which all seek after and promote the common good in a spirit of love for our fellow human beings.

They pray too for Parliament, the police and the emergency services who responded with such bravery, professionalism and compassion, and who continue to support all those affected by this terrible attack.

Some links to other statements of church leaders

[Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

[His Grace Bishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox](#)

[Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster](#)

[London Faith Leaders Forum](#)

[The Methodist Church](#)

[Paul Parker, Quakers in Britain](#)



[The Salvation Army](#)
[United Reformed Church](#)
[World Council of Churches](#)

Prayer in Westminster by Faith Leaders

[YouTube Video from the 'Catholic Church England and Wales'](#)

[BBC item: Dialogue marks faith's response to Westminster attacks](#)

'They Also Served' in WWI Service and Exhibition Sunday 2nd July in Birmingham



This is information from Bishop Dr Joe Aldred at Churches Together in England and Dr Angelina Osborne from the CTE project, 'They Also Served' is about a service and exhibition to solemnly remember and reflect upon the contributions of African and Caribbean Servicemen to WW1.

Service: Sunday 2 July 2017, 5PM – 7PM

Venue: The New Testament Church of God, Lozells Road, Birmingham B19 1NP

Keynote speaker: Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, priest vicar at Westminster Abbey and Chaplain to the Queen

With prayers, music, dance and poetry from Aberdeen Street Gospel Choir, operatic soprano Abigail Kelly, Brothers United in Christ, King Solomon Business School Choir, Roy McFarlane and Sandra Golding.

For many years, the contributions of African and Caribbean servicemen to the First World War has been largely forgotten and underexplored. The war's centenary (2014-2018) presents an opportunity to revisit this history, and to re-examine and rediscover African and Caribbean involvement. It is now recognised that the assistance and service of over 2 million Africans and 16,000 Caribbean's, not to mention the countless Black Britons that joined British regiments, made a considerable impact in terms of manpower and resources. It means that the Great War was a multi-racial and multi-national war.

[Download PDF Flyer of the Service Poster](#) (large file)

FREE REGISTRATION: www.bit.do/theyalsoserved

Website: www.theyalsoserved.co.uk

'They Also Served' is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

UPDATE: Responding to the Reformation conference



Jenny Bond writes:

Andrew Louth

We are delighted that Emeritus Professor Andrew Louth has agreed to speak at this autumn's conference, [Responding to the Reformation](#). He will speak at a session *Reflecting on the Reformation* which will hear voices from Churches not directly involved in the Reformation.

Subsidised places available

Bookings are coming in steadily for this major conference, open to all working ecumenically beyond the local level. It is the third in a series of conferences primarily aimed at Ecumenical Officers. On this occasion, however, in recognition of the importance of the topic, the net has been spread more widely.

In an attempt to encourage early bookings, CTE has taken the innovative step of subsidising all bookings made before midnight on Easter Monday. After that, the normal 'early bird' cost applies until the end of June. Jenny Bond, CTE Training, Resourcing and Events' said: 'I am confident that we will fill all the rooms we have booked at The Hayes and expect that much nearer the time the demand for places will exceed what is available. That's why we are encouraging people to book early, while we still able to request extra rooms from The Hayes.'

Visit CTE's website for [information about the conference](#), [conference costs](#) and [key information for participants](#).

Hope in NE Cheshire and Big Church Day Out



Pip Mosscrop writes:

Hope in North East Cheshire (Hope) brings together some thirty-nine churches led by twenty-nine Church Leaders of many denominations in Macclesfield and Bollington and the surrounding villages as a visible sign of the Kingdom working together in Love, Faith and Hope to make a difference for Christ's sake.

The Church Leaders of Hope have met the organisers of the The Big Church Day Out (BCDO) on several occasions in the last six months and are enthusiastically involved in promoting the BCDO in their Churches. They recognise that this is a massive commitment, in faith, by the organisers and that Hope is especially blessed to have this wonderful event on its doorstep as 15,000 people are expected to attend!

The Church Leaders recognise that the BCDO provides an opportunity for Christians of

all ages and all denominations to encourage their families and friends to get involved in their local Churches, to worship with others in their area, to strengthen their faith, and to be encouraged to be more comfortable in sharing what they believe – all in an atmosphere of fun and fellowship.

Each Church Leader is promoting the BCDO in a way which specifically meets the needs of each congregation. Some Churches have Hope/BCDO Champions who encourage those in their Churches to get involved. It is well recognised that this is the first year that the event has been held in the North West and it therefore requires special effort to encourage people of all ages to come and experience it. Hope itself is also providing advice, encouragement and co-ordination as well as the recruitment of the large number of essential volunteers.

**More information
about the Big
Church Day Out**

**... and an
invitation to
attend**



The Big Church Day Out gathers Christians from all over the country, of all ages and denominations for a weekend of worship, family fun, music and celebration.

Pip Mossdrop continues:

This vibrant expression of church unity is enjoyed by thousands of guests every year, and stands as the biggest annual evangelistic event in the UK. Groups and families come from all across the country, bringing many of their un-churched friends and family along as an introduction to church and faith. It is the UK's largest and fastest growing gathering of the church, expanding to two sites in 2017 at a time when church unity is more of a focus than ever before. Watch the [2016 Highlights video](#) from to find out more!

This year the event is coming North and will be at Capesthorne Hall in Cheshire on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd June.

The Big Church Day Out's vision for 2017 is one event in two locations - one is Macclesfield as above, the other is in West Sussex earlier in the week 27th and 28th May - with a total on both sites of 45,000 people 'coming together as one big family to worship and to celebrate all that is good'.

All details and how to book for either venue: www.bigchurchdayout.com

Reformation 500: Ecumenical Perspectives

Annual conference of the Society for Ecumenical Studies

How a better understanding of what took place 500 years ago in Wittenberg can draw people and churches closer together. This conference looks from a range of denominational perspectives at key issues of Reformation in order to engage from a different angle in a fruitful area of ecumenical discussion.



St Edmund Hall
Queen's Lane
Oxford, OX1 4AR
<http://www.seh.ox.ac.uk/contact-us>

17 June 2017, Saturday

Key Speakers:

PROF. DR. HENRIKE LÄHNEMANN

PROF. ANDREW LOUTH

PROF. JOHN MILBANK

For full programme and speaker's info visit:

<https://sites.google.com/site/thesocietyforecumenicalstudies/events/conferences/2017-conference>

[Download the Conference flyer for more information and booking](#)

UK Government's commitment to meet global anti-poverty goals



In response to the UK Government's outline to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, Christian Aid's Senior Adviser on Poverty and Inequality Helen Dennis said:

"Christian Aid welcomes today's publication of the UK Government's much-anticipated report on how it will put in to action the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both here in the UK and internationally.

"The SDGs were agreed at the UN in 2015 by world leaders, including the former Prime Minister David Cameron. They represent a potentially transformative agenda for tackling poverty, inequality and environmental challenges, including climate change. These goals are a rallying call and an opportunity for the UK Government to add some more meat to the bones of its 'Global Britain' vision, which was outlined again by the Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday."

The SDGs compel all countries to act, both at home and abroad, to tackle poverty, climate change, gender inequality and many other issues between now and 2030. They cover a huge range of issues, from the humanitarian crises in East Africa, to tackling

tax dodging and any future post-Brexit trade deals. Meeting the SDGs will require all UK Government departments to prioritise them in their single departmental plans.

Ms Dennis added: "We are pleased that the report makes a start on some of the areas of work that will be needed to meet the goals. We look forward to seeing more detail from all Government departments in the coming months.

"As the SDGs were decided, world leaders agreed that they would be about 'going beyond business as usual'. We hope that all UK Government Ministers will be excited by the potential of these goals, and use them to deliver transformational change for people and planet, both internationally and here in the UK.

"As UK parliamentarians have recommended, we urge the UK Government to step up at the UN in 2018, and report how they are working to meet these important goals, and what further work is being planned to deliver them."

Christian Aid is an Agency of CTE

UPDATE: News from Taizé in Birmingham

The latest people to become involved in the [Hidden Treasure weekend](#) are a group from the Catholic dioceses of Paisley and Galloway (Scotland), and also the Birmingham Chinese Methodist Fellowship.

The deadline for registrations has been fixed for 9 April 2017. There are so far, almost exactly 600 registrations, with participants speaking over 30 different languages. Nearly 10% of the participants speak Polish as well as English.

Dr. Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, will join us for the latter part of the meeting - on Sunday and Monday. He will speak during the Sunday evening prayer. In Taizé itself, between Easter and the Birmingham Meeting, we shall be welcoming [Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople](#). The Patriarch, widely regarded as the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians will visit on Tuesday 25 April.

In an article on [Meeting Christ in the discarded](#), Sam Ewell shares the background to a workshop which will be part of the One Day Programme for 16-18 year-olds.

In the Methodist/URC Church at Carrs Lane a "Hidden Treasures Exhibition" will display material about local groups working for a better world, and from those leading workshops. The information point and press centre, a Taizé bookshop, and a café (run by the Real Junk Food Project) will also be there.

In ten neighbourhoods of Birmingham, local teams are preparing to host participants. In the city-centre, a hot meal will be distributed on Friday evening, and Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes.



In [Sheffield Cathedral](#), there will be a Lenten Prayer on Monday, 3 April. In Taizé itself, among the new groups we look forward to welcoming this summer is the ecumenical [pilgrimage from Birmingham](#) led by Bishop David McGough (assistant bishop in the Catholic Archdiocese) and Bishop Anne Hollinghurst (suffragan bishop in the Anglican Diocese).

Visit the [Taizé Birmingham](#) website for more information.

Exploring the future of the UK after the EU referendum:

Conversations Welcome



JPIT issued this Press Release on 30th March 2017:

In readiness for the impending trigger of Article 50, four of the UK's largest Christian Churches, representing three quarters of a million members, are inviting their congregations to take part in discussions across the UK to explore what kind of society we should be seeking to create.

At a time when the UK is moving towards exiting the EU, there is naturally uncertainty about what our future as a country will look like, whichever way people voted in the referendum. Churches are being invited to take part in constructive conversations about the sort of society we would wish to live in, and hope to leave to future generations. Talking about things where people disagree can be difficult, so a pack - "Conversation Welcome" - has been provided to help.

The conversations will be held by local Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed and Church of Scotland Churches. They are being promoted by the Joint Public Issues Team, through which the four Churches work together on issues of justice and inequality.

The resource pack is available here <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/eu-referendum/conversationwelcome/>

Baptist Minister, Revd Phil Jump, who is coordinating the initiative and an adviser to the Joint Public Issues Team, commented: "Conversations are important at any time but the extraordinary recent political events have made the need more pressing. The EU Referendum campaign has left some mourning the loss of an important identity, while others are delighted by the opportunities that lie ahead.

"The process of leaving the European Union means making many important decisions that will shape the UK for years to come. By taking part in these conversations, people will discuss a vital underlying question - What kind of society should we be seeking to create?"

The Conversation Welcome discussion will suggest four questions to explore:

- What sort of society do we want to leave for future generations?

- How should we treat others?
- How should we use our resources?
- How should we make decisions?

The conversations can be held in any group size and the resources include prayers, reflections and videos.

Passion Play in Trafalgar Square

Helen Crawford for the Bible Society writes:



You've probably heard us say more than once how passionate we are about bringing the Bible to life. It's the heartbeat of all we do and it's never more literally outworked than on Good Friday with a dramatic retelling of the Easter story in front of 20,000 people.

Performed by the Wintershall Players, the Passion play dramatically depicts Jesus' miracles, death and resurrection and, as our reporter Hazel recounts, being among the audience is a moving experience. Come along!

The 90-minute performances take place in Trafalgar Square at 12 noon and 3.15 pm on Good Friday. It's free to attend and both performances are translated into British Sign Language.

We at Bible Society partner with Wintershall to put on the Passion play – something we're only able to do with gifts from our supporters. If you're among them, thank you!

Helen Crawford, Digital Content Manager, Bible Society
(Bible Society is a Body in Association of Churches Together in England)

Wittenberg Ecumenical Assembly

IEF celebrates its 50th Anniversary, 21st - 28th August 2017 Martin Luther's Thesis 62, which can also be seen in the choir of the Wittenberg Stadtkirche (Town Church), reads: *"The true treasure of the Church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."*



500 years later and 50 years after the Second Vatican Council, we wish to rediscover together, in ecumenical and international fellowship, this true treasure of the Gospel's

power to renew and unite. Each day one aspect of the theme will be given prominence with its reforming, theological, ethical, ecumenical and practical dimensions. We will develop these perspectives through Protestant – Catholic dialogues, discussion groups, workshops, ecumenical services and cultural evenings. It is to be a festival of encounters with Christians from different churches, initiatives, cultures and lands.

The main organiser, the International Ecumenical Fellowship (IEF), currently has members in 5 countries of Western Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, the UK and Spain) and in 5 Eastern European ones (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia).

[Download the flyer with further information here.](#)

(IEF is a Body in Association of CTE)

Exploring God in Dementia: Theology, Spirituality and Personhood

Ecumenical Study Day on Thursday 11 May 2017 from 10am - 4pm.



“The Bible comes alive in a new way when read from the perspective of someone with dementia. The Church can learn from people with dementia as well as encourage and grow their relationship with God,” says Dr Jennifer Bute, who will give an insider’s perspective on what it’s like to live with dementia at this study day.

The aim of the day is to theologically reflect on what it means to minister to and with those who are living with the dementia. What might their experience teach us about the personhood and love of God? How do we honour the memories and contributions of those who we love? A day of speakers and workshops, plus exhibitions and resources.

Key note speakers and workshop leaders include:

- Dr Peter Kevern: Associate Professor in Values in Care, Staffordshire University
- Dr Pia Matthews: Lecturer in theology, bioethics, medical law and healthcare chaplaincy at St Mary’s Twickenham
- Ian Sherriff: Academic Partnership Lead for Dementia at Plymouth University and a board member of the Alzheimer’s Society nationally
- Revd Dr Margaret Goodall: Former Chaplaincy Development Advisor with Methodist Homes for the Aged
- Revd Canon Dr Joanna Collicutt: Oxford Diocesan Advisor for Spiritual Care with older people and Intergenerational Worship
- Dr Julia Teale and Dr Ruth Lamont: researchers at the University of Exeter’s Centre for Research in Ageing and Cognitive Health (REACH)

Book via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/exploring-god-in-dementia->

[theology-spirituality-and-personhood-tickets-29476451861](#)

or by [downloading and completing the flyer](#).

[Click here for information and programme for the day](#)

And finally ...

Unity Prayer at Festivals in 2017



Quoting from the website <https://1721.org.uk/> :

From March to October 2017, evangelicals of all backgrounds and traditions will be affirming their commitment to unity for mission at events, festivals, and conferences. The prayer of Jesus in John 17:21 encourages and challenges us: "May they all be one that the world might believe".

With over 100,000 Christians expected to be involved, 17.21 promises to be an exciting initiative that will spread unity between different churches and Christian groups across the UK. 17.21 has brought together leading Christian festivals and conferences that are happening this year. Each participating event will read the same bible reading, prayer of commitment, a declaration of a shared life in Christ and play the same worship song. There will also be an artistic symbol of unity that will be transported to each event.

For the list of Festivals visit the website: <https://1721.org.uk/>

[You can download an extended version of the 17.21 Press Release and Vision here.](#)

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