

June 2024

Senior staff message

Bishop Malcolm writes...



Bishop Libby and I have spent much of May visiting the deaneries of the diocese to pray as part of Thy Kingdom Come – the worldwide movement of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost that encourages us each to pray for five others, that they may come to know the love of God in Jesus.

As I write, we are about to begin a day of prayer in the South East Deanery, where it will be a joy to pray in schools, at a food hub, with councillors, with people in a dementia care centre, an after school club, and with folks at a church where refugees and asylum seekers have found a welcome. In all these settings, and so many others over these eight days, we have prayed 'Thy Kingdom Come', giving thanks for the transformation that happens when the Holy Spirit is at work, and immersing ourselves in the endless stream of prayer which helps make this happen.

A well-known mark of this movement is the tradition of tying knots in a leather shoelace, one for each of the five people for whom you want to pray. Whether round your wrist as a bracelet or held in your pocket, it serves as a reminder to pray, not just in a general way, but to pray with love and attention to the particular needs of each of your five. Many find this a helpful way to pray, but the main thing is to continue praying for our friends, family members, work colleagues etc – they are those God has laid on our hearts to bring before him each day seeking his blessing, his gift of life, life in all its fullness, through Jesus.

Prayer has an impact on those who pray, just as much as on those for whom we are praying. It makes us alert to the command of Jesus to 'make disciples of all nations' – to be ready to give a reason for the hope we have in Jesus, and to encourage others to explore what it means to follow him. 'Making Disciples' is one of our key priorities as a diocese.

This means being imaginative about how we seek to engage people in church life. It means PCCs recognising where new forms of church

are possible, new ways and new places of worship, and trying out new approaches, to complement and enrich a revitalised parish ministry.

It has been wonderful on this pilgrimage to hear the stories of adults and young people as they have come recently to be confirmed. The depth of joy and commitment of confirmation candidates moves the whole church. For all the struggles of this present time, God is graciously and generously at work amongst us.

Praying for new disciples confronts us with the real challenges of our day. The inequalities that mean in hard times households are dependent on foodbanks. The horrors of war and oppression from which people have to flee for their safety. The multiple impacts of climate change and the urgency of our response. We simply have to live, eat, travel, work, and invest differently. This goes along with praying, 'Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done.'

Back in April, Archbishop Justin spent a day of prayer with us across the diocese. One of the places we all prayed was Crich Stand, a monument from which you can see all of Derbyshire and several other counties. As the wind blew against us, more than a hundred linked arms around the monument, facing inwards to pray for the renewal of our churches and communities, and then facing outwards to bless everyone in the Diocese and county of Derbyshire. Let the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit renew us, take us deeper with God, and equip us for all we are called to do as we seek to follow Jesus.

+ Malcolm Repton

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