

## 2017 : Year of Prayer

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I'm useless at New Year resolutions, so I very rarely make any, that way I can be sure I won't break them! However, at the beginning of a new year, it's good to take stock, to see where we're at in our lives, and to see what might need some priority attention in the year ahead. What's true for us individually is also true for the church. One of the areas of church life I've been thinking about a lot recently is prayer. There are three or four of us who meet to pray on a Friday morning at 7am, and our monthly church prayer meeting gathers no more than 6-10 people. Clearly, many more than that are regularly attending our Sunday services where we pray, and our home groups have a significant prayer element as part of their regular pattern. However, I sense that this is an area that we would do well to give some serious attention to this year.

### Year of Prayer

So, I've nominated 2017 as a *Year of Prayer* at All Saints. As Nicky Gumbel (founder of Alpha) says, 'Prayer is the most important activity of our lives. It is the main way in which we develop a relationship with Our Father in heaven'. If this is true—and I believe that it is—then there are some important questions that we need to ask of ourselves, both as a church and individually.

- How important is prayer for me, for us as a church?
- Do we see prayer as 'the most important activity of our lives'?
- Are we happy with our prayer life?
- Do we really know how to pray?
- What is prayer anyway?

I have to confess, some of those questions make me feel a little uncomfortable! If we're honest, most of us would have to answer 'no', or 'not sure', to some or all of those questions.

### Lent: The Prayer Course

Jesus' disciples, observing him as he prayed, asked him 'Lord, teach us to pray'. He responded by giving them the prayer we know as the Lord's Prayer. 'Lord, teach us to pray' is a great prayer! To help us with that, we will be running the Prayer Course ([www.prayercourse.org](http://www.prayercourse.org)) during Lent this year. This is 'from the makers of Alpha', and, like Alpha, combines a video with discussion. I've had a good look at the course, and I think it

will be both helpful and enjoyable. There are six sessions, and the course will be run in our home groups during Lent. Materials (DVDs and notes) will be provided to the home groups well in advance. For those who are not in a home group, or where your group is unable to run the course in Lent, additional sessions will be run on Monday evenings from 6th March to 10th April. Venue and timings will be advised nearer the time. It may be possible to run a daytime group for those not able to access others—do please let Pearl in the office know if you would value this opportunity. During Lent, there will also be three sermons on the theme of Prayer in our 10.30 services.

Summer: Thy Kingdom Come

We will be joining in with the Archbishops' prayer initiative Thy Kingdom Come ([www.thykingdom.co.uk](http://www.thykingdom.co.uk)) in the week leading up to Pentecost. More soon.

Autumn: Quiet Day

A Quiet Day for adults, possibly including youth. Details later.

Coming up...

I think it may be the right time to set up a prayer partner/triplet scheme. If you'd be interested in helping to think this through, and being involved in making it happen, please let me know.

What could I do right away?

I know that 7am is ridiculously early, but you would be very welcome if you decide to join us for prayer at that time on a Friday. There is the opportunity to meet for prayer as a whole church on the second Wednesday of every month at 7.45pm in the small hall—I'd love to have to move it to a larger room. You could help make that happen!

Resources

Some books on prayer I've found helpful:

Michael Mayne, *Prayer*, DLT 2011

Timothy Keller, *Prayer - Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, Hodder 2014

Philip Yancey, *Prayer - Does it make any Difference?*, Hodder 2006

Richard Foster, *Sanctuary of the Soul*, Hodder 2011

Pete Greig, *God on Mute*, Kingsway 2007

With every blessing for our Year of Prayer,



Rev. David Chamberlin (Rector)  
01223 861511 :: 07805 083300  
[rector@allsaintsmilton.org.uk](mailto:rector@allsaintsmilton.org.uk)

Our Bible verse for 2017 is:

**Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**

*Romans 12.12.*