

Strive *or* Thrive?

A week of prayer & reflection leading up to
our special day of prayer for the future of

St Paul's Church.



Monday 8th April 2024

Prayer:
O Lord our God, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth.
We praise You for Your works and love for us.
Help us today as we look at this passage written for Your people by your servant David. We ask that by Your Holy Spirit we understand every word that you have for us here. Lord we give You this time and ask that You will speak to us.
Amen

Psalm 145:17-19:
17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. 18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

These verses from Psalms were written by David, they offer an amazing insight into God's character. Just think about that first verse, read it slowly. The promise that He is near to us when we call on Him in truth is for us as well as the early Christians, we need to take this promise on board and bring our concerns for our church whilst spending time getting close our Lord. Something we need to do in our daily lives and in our preparation for the forthcoming special day of Prayer we have planned at St Paul's Christians from the beginning would have known this passage and trusted these promises, The apostles, early Christians, we are learning from exactly the same passage! As we think about our own church's struggles and joys, we know that God's faithfulness is across time and is with us now, just as it was with the Apostles. God is the same, Yesterday, today and forever. We need to call upon the Lord in truth, knowing that he hears our cry and saves us.

Pray:
Remember prayer is a conversation with God, these are a few prompts, but here it is just you and God.

- Think about your relationship with God
- Cry out to Him in truth.
- Think about our St. Paul's church family & how we can do more than survive,
- And give thanks for all those in roles of leadership.

Tuesday 9th April 2024

Prayer:
Loving Father we ask that Your Holy Spirit will be with us as we read and reflect on Your word and its meaning for us today.
Thank You for the knowledge that we can come to You in prayer whenever we wish, having a conversation with You our God.
Amen

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:
16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The Apostle Paul was writing to the church family at Thessalonica saying how thankful to God he was for their faith in spreading the gospel message. Timothy had recently returned to Paul from visiting the church. Paul then gives the church guidance on how to live as followers of Christ. Some of the instructions Paul gives in verse 18 are to rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances. These are not always easy to do when we are facing challenges as individuals or as a church family. To me the most important message is the last part of verse 18, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Pray:
The following prompts will help you, but this is your time with God.

● We pray that St Paul’s Church will be a church that prays together to ask what God has called us to do.

● We pray that through reading your word, prayer, praise and rejoicing in you our Lord your church family will believe the joy of the Lord is indeed our strength for ever.

Amen

Wednesday 10th April 2024

Prayer:
Father God, We thank You that we are able to meet in a free country and freely able to worship and yet, in a secular society, there are still pressures causing difficulties when we try to follow Your word. Guide and lead us in the right way whilst being loving and truly compassionate. In a broken world, help us to reach out to our neighbour, to spread Your word, Your message and true love.
In Your Holy Name, **Amen**

Colossians 4:2-6:

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Now we ask how that preparation would look in places where it is unsafe to be a Christian? Here is the poem Matt chose recently by Joshua Luke Smith:

Blessed are the risk takers, the rebels and the rule breakers,
The grieving and the broken,
Blessed are the brave and the outspoken.
Blessed are the hidden and disguised who watch their words,
guard their footsteps and fear for their lives.
Blessed are those in prison for their faith
Blessed are those who are spied on by the state.
Blessed are the lied about and cheated, the unjustly accused,
abused and the mistreated.
Blessed are those who flee when they want to stay and
Blessed are those who remain when they could run away.
Blessed are the refugee and the displaced, the exile and the excluded,
the shamed and the disgraced.
Blessed are those who worship in secret,
who whisper their songs, hide their bibles,
forgive those who do them wrong and blessed are those who are scared but choose to follow just the same and Blessed are those who are persecuted in Jesus' name.
Blessed are the risk takers, the rebels and the rule breakers
and blessed are those who have nothing but prayer
for God is always with them and the Kingdom is theirs.

Pray:
Prayer points you might like to include in your prayers today:
- Persecuted Christians worldwide (the most persecuted of all religious groups).
- Thanks that we have a wonderful and all knowing God, who understands us.
- For opportunities and the courage to share our faith without being intimidated.

Amen

Thursday 11th April 2024

Prayer:
Dear Heavenly Father, we ask that you will open up Your Word as we read it. May Your Holy Spirit challenge, guide and inspire us to serve You better. We ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus.
Amen.

1 John 5:14-15
[14]This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15]And if we know that He hears us whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.

The Apostle John knew from his personal experience that the God he served answers prayer. He had confidence, inspired by the Holy Spirit's leading to ask his Lord to hear and answer his prayers. Therefore, John trusted God's faithfulness towards His children, therefore he wrote; 'This is the confidence we have in approaching God.' (1 Peter 5a) Furthermore, John was there on the mountainside when he heard his Saviour state; **'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'** (Matthew 6:6.) John also fully understood, as in the Lord's Prayer, that we pray '**Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'** (Matthew 6:10). This is why John added in verse 14 of 1 John 5; **'that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.'**

As we approach own prayer time with the Lord, let us take heart, remember that the Lord hears our prayers and will answer them according to His will. So, we will have the answer to our request (1 Peter 5:15.)

We pray
Prayer Prompts:
- As we prepare to tackle difficult topics we will have patience, love and understanding.
- For the financial security of St Paul's in the year ahead and beyond.

we will be a church that pleases God and not the world.
Amen

Friday 12th April 2024

Prayer:

Father God and head of the church, as we draw close to our special day of prayer, we ask that You help us discern Your will for our church. Grant us a clear understanding of how we should prepare, finance and conduct our ministry. Show Your hand in our future as we seek to serve You and reach out to those who are yet to know You. **Amen.**

Acts 2:42

[15] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The book of Acts records the beginning of the church. The very same church all true believers are a part of today. The early church had challenges just as we do. Some challenges are the same, others are new. God's word is always honest about struggles within the church – so we should be too. Volunteers, finance & prayers are always needed. But we must not forget that God is always with His people – if we are praying for His will to be done, and we are trying to do it whilst aiming for unity, then God will be working with us. **Acts 2:42** succinctly tells us what we should be devoting ourselves to: learning/teaching, fellowship, communion and prayer. God has equipped us for these activities:

[11] And He gave the apostles*, the prophets*, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13a] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God… **Ephesians 4:11-13a**

For any part of Christ's church to <u>thrive</u> it needs to be <u>steeped</u> in God's word (teaching/learning), fellowship, communion and prayer. Through these core ingredients God will work to help us grow not just as individuals but as a church family that <u>thrives</u>. **Matthew 9:37-38** says:

[37] Then He said to His disciples, "**The harvest is plentiful**, but the labourers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest."

Let's not overlook "The harvest is plentiful." We have work to do….

We pray:

- God reveal my personal role in the life of the fellowship of believers.
- What do we need to reap the harvest God has planted for us?
- What is God calling us to do as individuals. How can I help St. Paul's thrive?

Amen

*We still have the Apostles and Prophets today – as their word is recorded in scripture for us.