

PRAYER GUIDE

FOR Parliament AND THE Nation

December January February 2020



QUARTERLY UPDATE - CONTINUE TO PRAY

KNIFE CRIME

Knife crime continues to affect many communities and blight people's lives. According to an October 2019 survey of 29 police forces in England and Wales, more than a thousand children were caught with weapons in school last year. A survey by the Press Association discovered the weapons included knives, blades, knuckledusters and a Taser stun gun. The children included a 14year-old with a sword and a four-year-old with an unnamed weapon. Head teachers' leader Geoff Barton said the findings were "grim but unsurprising".

The survey, which follows concern about rising levels of knife crime, was based on Freedom of Information data from police forces. It found schoolchildren involved in incidents with many different types of bladed weapon, including lock knives, penknives, craft knives and garden shears.

In Bedfordshire, a pupil was caught in possession of a machete and in Manchester a samurai sword was recovered from school premises. Thames Valley police discovered a bayonet in a school and in the West Midlands, a 15-year-old was found in possession of an axe.

The figures showed 1,072 incidents involving weapons, up from 831 in the same areas in the previous year. But they did not include statistics from the biggest force, the Metropolitan Police in London. The data was based on the financial year; and the survey found another 311 incidents between April and August 2019. **CONTINUE TO PRAY** for those who have lost a loved one to knife crime. Pray that all political parties and others can work together to find long-term solutions to the issue of knife crime.

CLIMATE CHANGE PROTESTS

For the first two weeks in October, climate change activists from Extinction Rebellion brought parts of central London to a standstill. Their main intention was to highlight what they believe is the urgency of climate change. They also believe the UK economy should become "carbon neutral" by 2025. However, many people complained that the goal is unrealistic. Also, that the protests will alienate law abiding members of the public.

In addition, Swedish teenage environmental activist Greta Thunberg has gained international recognition during 2019. due to her opinions and campaigning on climate change. At a United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York in September 2019, she accused world leaders of "stealing her dreams and her childhood." However, critics pointed out that UK CO2 emissions continue to fall. Protests should instead focus on CO2 emissions from China and India. Experts believe Miss Thunberg's straightforward approach to climate change will bring climate protesters into conflict with the complexities of decision-making in Western democracies.

CONTINUE TO PRAY that both Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion act within the law and respect the rights of others to disagree with their opinions. The practice of saying prayers in the Houses of Parliament is believed to have started in about 1558, and was common practice by 1567. These follow the Christian faith and there is currently no multi-faith element. Attendance is voluntary.

The present form of prayers probably dates from the reign of Charles II (1660-1685). Members of the public are not allowed into the public galleries of either the House of Commons or House of Lords while prayers are being said. MPs and Peers stand for prayers facing the wall behind them. It is thought this practice developed due to the difficulty Members would historically have faced of kneeling to pray while wearing a sword.

In the House of Commons, The Speaker's Chaplain usually reads the prayers. The form of the main prayer is as follows: "Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of Parliament and all in positions of responsibility, the guidance of your Spirit. May they never lead the nation wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but laying aside all private interests and prejudices keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all mankind; so may your kingdom come and your name be hallowed. Amen."

In the House of Lords, a senior Bishop (Lord Spiritual) who sits in the Lords usually reads the prayers, at the beginning of each sitting. The text of the Prayers read in the House of Lords are printed in the Companion to the Standing Orders. They start with a reading from a Psalm, followed by The Lord's Prayer. The following prayer is then said:

'O Lord our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most Gracious Sovereign Lady Oueen Elizabeth; and so replenish her with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that she may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way: Endue her plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant her in health and wealth long to live; strengthen her that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies; and finally after this life she may attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.' This is followed by a prayer for the Royal Family:

Almighty God, the Fountain of all Goodness, we humbly beseech thee to bless Philip Duke of Edinburgh, Charles Prince of Wales and all the Royal Family: Endue them with thy Holy Spirit; enrich them with thy Heavenly Grace; prosper them with all happiness; and bring them to thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

Two further prayers are then prayed. The first is for 'Heavenly Wisdom from above' to enable Peers to be directed and guided in all they do. The second is that God will go before all those in the House of Lords and bless them with his favour and continual help. The prayers finish with the Grace being said.

WELCOME TO OUR PRAYER GUIDE

At the time of writing, the situation with Brexit remains unresolved. Although MPs voted in October to approve Boris Johnson's Brexit deal, they rejected plans to fast track the legislation. This would have enabled the United Kingdom to leave the EU on 31 October. Instead, the Prime Minister put his EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill on hold and published a bill proposing a general election on 12 December. This only needed a simple majority to succeed and was intended to end the current paralysis in Parliament. Under the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, a two-thirds majority of all MPs (434) is needed for this to happen.

On 28 October, EU leaders agreed in principle to extend Brexit up to 31 January 2020. EU Council President Donald Tusk called it a "flextension." This means the UK could leave before the deadline if a deal was approved by Parliament.

The issue of people smuggling and illegal immigration was brought into stark focus recently. On 23 October, 39 people were found dead in a refrigerated trailer in Grays, Essex. Initially, police said the victims were Chinese. However, a number of Vietnamese families have described how they fear their loved ones are among the dead. DNA tests were, therefore, carried out in Vietnam to help identify the dead. It has been suggested that some of the victims paid thousands of pounds to guarantee their safe passage to the UK. They would then be able to start working and send money home to their families.

A lorry driver from Northern Ireland, Maurice Robinson, was charged with 39 counts of manslaughter, conspiracy to traffic people, conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration and money laundering. Although the lorry had travelled from Bulgaria to the channel port of Zeebrugge, no checks were carried out there.

Over recent decades, increasing numbers of people have tended to take two weeks off work during the Christmas and New Year period. This is often described by the media as the 'two week Christmas shutdown.' This contrasts sharply with the immediate post-war period where employees worked on Christmas Eve and returned to work the day after Boxing Day. New Year's Day only became a bank holiday in 1974. However, there are several regional variations. 2 January is a bank holiday in Scotland and 12 July is a bank holiday in Northern Ireland.

May God continue to bless you.

Neil Neil Smith, Editor

Please use these prayers both in your individual and church prayer times to hold the nation and its leaders before God in prayer, petition and with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 2:1-4).



Neil graduated with a degree in Applied Chemistry from the University of Hertfordshire and worked for many years in the pharmaceutical industry. He enjoys singing both at home and in church. He really values the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer.

Neil also sits on the Governing Body at his local school and is a youth leader at his church. He lives with his wife in a house where their children visit frequently to enjoy plenty of home cooking and fellowship.

Neil Smith PRAYER GUIDE EDITOR

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December 1st - December 7th

'The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.' *Romans 13:11*

A) s

SUNDAY 1

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; so that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



MONDAY 2

Judge of all the Earth, we give you thanks because, in Jesus' coming as man, the day of our deliverance has dawned. Through him you will make all things new, as he comes in power and triumph to judge the world. Amen.

TUESDAY 3

Forgiving Saviour, we know how easy it is to lose sight of the significance of Advent as Christmas Day draws closer. Help us to keep our focus on the true meaning of this season in the church's calendar, we pray. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 4

Creator God, we praise you for the many beautiful Advent hymns and carols we sing at this time of year. Thank you that they are so popular and have the power to summon up a special kind of midwinter mood. May we be conscious of what we are singing and do it to your glory. Amen.

THURSDAY 5

Light of the World, we realise that Advent in the Northern Hemisphere takes place during the darkest time of year. Let the lighting of Advent candles each day be a reminder for us of John the Baptist who came "as a witness to the light." Amen.

FRIDAY 6

Righteous Judge, help us to look forward with eager anticipation as we remember your first coming into the world at Christmas. Please bless us, your children, who long for your second coming into the world and make us ready to receive you, we pray. Amen.

SATURDAY 7

Caring Lord, we bring before you those we know who are going through times of darkness. We bring them before you and ask, gracious Lord, that you will bring them both the light of your love, plus a hope and direction. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

ADVENT

Advent is observed in many Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation, both for the celebration of Jesus' nativity on the first Christmas Day and the return of Jesus at the Second Coming, "when every eye shall see him and every knee shall bow." Hymns and carols sung at this time tend to reflect both aspects of the Advent season. Examples include 'O come O come Emmanuel' and 'I o! He comes with clouds descending."

The term Advent comes from the Latin word "adventus" which means "coming." Traditions associated with this time of year include opening an Advent calendar each day or displaying an Advent wreath. Other people have Advent candles which they light each day from 1st to 24th December.

There are always four Sundays in Advent. In practice, this means the earliest it can start is on 27th November and the latest is 3rd December. The fourth Sunday of Advent will therefore be as early as 18th December or as late as 24th December.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

MEDIA

December 8th - December 14th

'For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.' *Colossians 1:16*



SUNDAY 8

Christians working in the media can often feel intimidated and reluctant to share their faith with others. One of the many downsides of this situation is the existence of a negative atmosphere where all expressions of faith are treated with suspicion.

CREATOR God, please equip all Christians working in the media with the skills they need to do their jobs well. Give them boldness to stand for their faith in an often cynical environment. Amen.

MONDAY 9

Journalists working abroad reporting from countries such as Syria and Iraq often appear on television wearing bulletproof vests and protective headgear. Unfortunately, over the years, several have been killed in countries such as Syria, Turkey and Iraq. This has sometimes been accidental but has often been a deliberate act of violence.

DEAR Lord, we pray that all media professionals, whether Christian or non-Christian, would strive for integrity and truth in their work. Please especially protect those working in dangerous situations, often risking their lives to bring us the news. Amen.

TUESDAY 10

The Church of England established a Digital team in October 2016 to harness the considerable opportunities that digital and social media bring. Since then, the Church has seen several key successes. This includes a successful Christmas 2018 #FollowTheStar Advent and Christmas campaign that had a reach and engagement of 7.94 million. Plus a LentPilgrim and EasterPilgrim 2019 campaign that reached 6.9 million.

Every day we are exposed to constant streams of news, images and information through radio, TV, newspaper, advertising, PR and online technologies such as blogs and social media. This unrelenting media flow has been and continues to be hugely influential in shaping our culture and transforming our society. Many Christians have found the media world (especially new online media technologies) hard to understand and have, therefore, failed to engage with it. However, events such as the Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis show how the media has a vital positive role in our society. It does this by keeping people informed, giving the voiceless a voice. holding the powerful to account, highlighting injustice and challenging opinions.

Digital media provide the church with enormous potential to grow and connect with the large numbers of un-churched people in their communities and throughout the world. Social media in particular is a great evangelistic tool allowing churches and individual Christians to talk with people of all faiths and none, sharing ideas and stimulating discussion. **FATHER** God, stir your church to engage with the digital world and to use this new communications platform to explore innovative and creative ways of evangelism and discipleship. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 11

In recent years, MPs have received an increasing number of hostile and threatening communications either by email or on Twitter and Instagram. This has often left them feeling fearful of expressing their thoughts on various issues in public.

ALMIGHTY God, we pray for our MPs who are attempting to work while under constant pressure from the media. Please ensure that appropriate boundaries are respected and give them wisdom in how they use the media. Let it not be for their own political ends, but to bring clarity and truth. Amen.



THURSDAY 12

UK news media have often been very proactive in raising awareness of overseas conflicts, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. One of the most famous examples was BBC reporter Michael Buerk's report from Ethiopia in 1984. This led directly to the Band Aid and Live Aid fundraising events.

LOVING Lord, thank you that the media provides a voice to those suffering through conflict, oppression, exploitation or injustice. Guide media professionals to use their skills in raising awareness of these issues, challenge mindsets and stir us to action to bring your love to a needy world. Amen.

FRIDAY 13

The term 'fake news' first became a hot topic in 2017. It is a type of propaganda consisting of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media or online social media. Usually, these stories are created to either influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion.

HOLY Spirit, bless those media professionals who are committed to the truth and uphold the highest ethical standards. Increase their influence within the industry and use them to transform the hearts of others. Amen.

SATURDAY 14

Since the beginning of 2018, the Church of England Digital Team have trained more than 2000 parishes in how to write for social media. The training explores how to use Facebook and Instagram, dealing with negativity online, advertising, making the most of the online resource 'A Church Near You' and learning about language and audiences for websites and social media.

DEAR Jesus, inspire your Church to support and interact with the media in a positive way. Guide and encourage more Christians to consider media as a career and provide them with mentors who can support them as they start out. Amen.



December 15th - December 21st

'See the Lord has chosen Bezalel...and he has filled him with the Spirit of God with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts; to make artistic designs to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship.' *Exodus 35: 30-35*

Exodus 35: 30-.



SUNDAY 15

Everlasting Lord, we thank you for the rich cultural heritage we have in the Church; including works of literature, architecture, stained glass and music. Help us to share this heritage with others in ways that draw them to you. Amen.

MONDAY 16

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the many religious paintings that show us often familiar scenes from the Bible. May they cause us to reflect on what we see and also to give thanks for the artist's imagination and skill. In your name, Amen.

TUESDAY 17

God of wonders, you have placed a spirit of creativity in the heart of every human. Help us to discover and use our creative talents for your glory. May we also appreciate the skills and abilities of others, we pray. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 18

Creator God, we are so grateful for the gift of music in its many different styles. May those with musical skill and ability bring increasing honour and glory to you, through their dedicated practice and performance. Amen.

THURSDAY 19

Generous Saviour, we thank you that, since 2001, admission to museums and galleries in the United Kingdom has been free. We praise you for the huge increase in visitor numbers since then. May there continue to be a diverse range of audiences from different social groups. Amen.

FRIDAY 20

Faithful One, we give grateful thanks for the money generated by the UK's creative industries and the jobs it provides. Help us to encourage further growth in the years to come and may increasing numbers of people appreciate the value it brings. Amen.

SATURDAY 21

Almighty and eternal God, to whom we must all give account; guide with your Spirit all artists and musicians in the UK. May they seek to enrich our culture, so that all may benefit. Please give them skill in communicating different concepts and ideas in ways that we can comprehend. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

ART, MUSIC AND CULTURE

In recent years, the UK's creative industries have grown quite considerably. From film to theatre, books to advertising and gaming to social media; put together these generate £100 billion a year and provide over 3 million jobs.

Over the last 400 years or so, there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of new paintings with a religious theme. Some people have attributed this to a fall in religious belief across mainland Europe. Paintings such as The Creation of Adam, The Wedding at Cana and The Last Judgement are intended to illustrate, supplement and portray in tangible form the principles of Christianity.

Culture has been described as: "the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts." The term "Western culture" tends to define the culture of European countries as well as those that have been heavily influenced by European immigration, such as the United States. Western culture has its roots in the Classical Period of the Greco-Roman era and the rise of Christianity in the 14th century.



December 22nd - December 28th

'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.' *Isaiah 9:2*

SUNDAY 22

Almighty God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that, as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

MONDAY 23

Faithful One, we want to thank you that numbers attending cathedral services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day have increased by 13% over the last 10 years. May visitors find these buildings to be both awe-inspiring and uplifting. We pray for this increase to continue in the coming years. Amen.

TUESDAY 24

Lord of Lords, we recognise that Christmas is a natural opportunity for people to re-connect with their local church or cathedral. We pray that many more will have the joy of rediscovering the Christmas story in a church or cathedral this Christmas time. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 25

All praise to you, Almighty God and heavenly king, who sent your Son into the world to take our nature upon him and to be born of a pure virgin. Grant that, as we are born again in him, so he may continually dwell in us and reign on earth as he reigns in heaven with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY 26

Unchanging Saviour, we thank you for the tradition of 'Nine Lessons and Carols', where Bible readings are interspersed with carols and hymns. Thank you that these popular services take place throughout the country. May we always be inspired by what we sing and hear in these services, even if the music and readings are very familiar to us. Amen.

FRIDAY 27

Loving Father, as we remember Jesus' birth, help us to share with others the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and the worship of the wise men. May we be forever grateful that we are your children. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

SATURDAY 28

Prince of Peace, we realise that Christmas is a stressful time for many families. The expectation to buy presents that can't really be afforded is ever present. Help us to remember how your Son Jesus Christ, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." May we be careful about the amount of money we spend at this time of year. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

CHRISTMAS

Christmas is seen by many in the retail sector as the biggest commercial opportunity of the year. People are encouraged to spend more money at Christmas than at any other time of year. Whether it be buying food and drink or the latest "must have" for the children, this is the time when everyone is encouraged to spend, eat and drink more.

However, one of the many downsides of this behaviour is that it can push poorer people further into arrears than they otherwise were. Additional credit card debt associated with this extra spending can take six months or more to pay off. In all this, many Christians feel the wonder of the Incarnation and the message it brings to all humanity has been lost.

Nevertheless, figures published in October 2018 show a total of 135,000 people came to Church of England cathedrals to worship on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 2017. This represents an increase of 3% on the previous year and the highest total since records began.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

ISRAEL

December 29th - January 4th

'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they prosper who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" *Psalm 122 6-7*

SUNDAY 29

Although Israel is a small country, it borders Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian territories on the West Bank. Relations with other countries have not always been good, However, Israel did sign a peace treaty with Egypt in March 1979.

HEAVENLY Father, we praise you for this first ever peace treaty between Israel and an Arab nation. Thank you that it ended three decades of hostilities between these neighbouring countries and remains in place today. Amen.

MONDAY 30

Israel has only one official language, Hebrew. Not surprisingly, the majority of the population speaks it daily. However, Arabic is classed as having a 'special status in the state' and is spoken by the Arab minority. Other languages such as English and French are also widely spoken.

HOLY Spirit, who enabled the apostles to speak in different languages at Pentecost. Thank you for the languages other than Hebrew that are widely spoken and understood in Israel. In your name, Amen.

TUESDAY 31

Latest statistics show that Israel's population is estimated to be just below 9.1 million. Not surprisingly, its two largest cities are Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Israel's annual population growth rate in 2017 was 1.9%. This was more than three times higher than Western developed countries' 0.6%. Some are predicting that Israel's population may double in the next thirty years.

GOOD Shepherd, thank you that Israel has a parliamentary democracy. As the population grows in the coming decades, we ask that it can develop in a sustainable fashion that protects the local environment. Amen.

Israel is a Middle Eastern country on the Mediterranean Sea, which Jews, Christians and Muslims regard as the biblical Holy Land. Its most sacred sites are in Jerusalem. Within the Old City, the Temple Mount complex includes the Dome of the Rock shrine, the historic Western Wall, Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Israel's financial hub is the city of Tel Aviv, which is also known for its beaches.

In terms of religion within the country, as of 2019, 74.2% were Jewish, while 17.8% were Muslims, with 2.0% of the population identifying as Christians. The Christian population primarily comprises Arab Christians, but also includes immigrants from the former Soviet Union and foreign workers of multinational companies. These are also a number of Messianic Jews. These are Jews who have converted to Christianity and believe that Jesus is the Messiah. But they like to keep elements of their Jewish tradition.

Israel is the only Middle Eastern country with a parliamentary democracy. The head of government is the Prime Minister. ß



WEDNESDAY 1

The Holocaust, also known as the Shoah, is a defining event in Jewish history. The genocide of six million Jews between 1941 and 1945 in German–occupied Europe resulted in the murder of around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population.

GOD of all comfort, we bring before you all those affected by the Holocaust. We pray that adults and children around the world will always have a good awareness of the Holocaust and what it involved. May they not be ignorant of what happened more than 70 years ago. In your precious name, we pray. Amen.



THURSDAY 2

The Six-Day War, also known as the Arab–Israeli War, lasted from 5 to 10 June 1967. It was fought by Israel against Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Israel launched pre-emptive air strikes that crippled the air forces of Egypt and its allies. They then staged a successful ground offensive, seizing the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.

AWESOME God, thank you for protecting Israel during this very short war. We pray for peace in the Middle East and greater understanding and tolerance between Jew and Arab. Amen.



FRIDAY 3

There are currently about 14.5million Jews in the world today, of which 46% live in Israel. In 2018, about 185,000 babies were born in Israel and about 45,000 people died. In addition, Israel welcomed approximately 40,000 new immigrants during 2018, with most arriving from Russia, Ukraine, America and France.

MERCIFUL Saviour, we thank you that the Jewish population in Israel and around the world is gradually increasing. May they be protected from discrimination and harm and allowed to live peacefully, we pray. Amen.



SATURDAY 4

Jewish people have asked at various times "how can someone be Jewish and believe in Jesus?" The answer is that Jesus was Jewish himself and attended the different Old Testament festivals. Jewish Christians believe there is no contradiction as Jesus was the fulfilment of the Old Testament law.

LOVING Lord Jesus, please help Jewish Christians as they seek to share the gospel with their fellow Jews. Give them the words to say as they speak with those who may not have heard the gospel before or are suspicious of what it means to be a Christian. Amen.

'Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. The Lord will sustain him on his sick-bed and restore him from his bed of illness.' Psalm 41.1&3



SUNDAY 5

Almighty God, we thank you for our NHS and for all who work in it to care for others. We pray that you would preserve it through its current difficulties and ensure that it remains able to provide quality treatment, free at the point of delivery, available to all according to their clinical need. Amen.

MONDAY 6

TUESDAY 7

Liberating Father, thank you for the increasing numbers of doctors and nurses working in the NHS. Nevertheless, staff shortages and absences remains a concern. Guide NHS leaders to address these staffing issues in a long-term, sustainable manner. Amen.

Saviour Jesus, bless the work of GPs as they support, listen to and care for us when we are weak and sick. Encourage more junior doctors to consider training as GP and provide the necessary support to enable them to do their job with compassion and skill. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 8

Generous Lord, we realise the NHS is mainly funded through general taxation and national insurance contributions. Help us realise that government has many demands on how taxpayers money is spent and cannot always provide the NHS with as much funding as they would like. Amen.

THURSDAY 9

Good Shepherd, comfort the elderly who are stuck in hospital due to a lack of social care arrangements which would allow them to return home. Increase investment in healthcare services within our communities, we pray. Help us to honour the elderly by caring for them in their old age. Amen.

FRIDAY 10

Everlasting God, please give wisdom to the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as they attempt to deal with financial pressures on the NHS within their respective countries. Guide them as they address issues specific to the NHS in these three countries, we pray. Amen.

SATURDAY 11

Righteous Judge, we bring before you the situation where the average waiting time for routine GP appointments is now greater than two weeks. Please help GPs and reception staff to implement more efficient and effective ways of coping with this rise in patient demand, which does not cause an increase in stress levels. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

NHS

The NHS is under pressure with figures showing that 44% of NHS trusts ended the 2017-18 financial year in deficit. However, this compares favorably with the 2015/16 financial year when 66% of NHS trusts were in deficit. At the halfway point in 2018/19, NHS trusts were forecasting to end the year £558 million in deficit.

In August 2019, Prime Minister Boris Johnson gave the green light to 20 new building and infrastructure projects in the NHS in England. The £850m package is intended to pay for new wards, intensive care units and diagnostic centres, as well as refurbishing some existing facilities over the next five vears. Mr Johnson also said there would be an extra £1bn this year to improve and maintain existing buildings. In response, The Health Foundation said that NHS facilities in England were "in major disrepair" with a £6bn maintenance backlog. However, the head of NHS England, Simon Stevens, said the money was a "significant start" to "much needed capital investment "

January 12th - January 18th

'Be happy, young man, while you are young and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.' *Ecclesiastes 11:9*



SUNDAY 12

Dear Lord, we bring to you the growing number of young people with poor mental health, the equivalent of four in every classroom. We pray for them to receive support and build resilience to face life's challenges, both now and in the future. Amen.



MONDAY 13

Caring Father, please come near to young adults who risk being drawn into harmful relationships and activities. Lead them to those who can help them to escape from addiction, crime, exploitation and other risks that endanger their lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

TUESDAY 14

Lord of all Wisdom and Knowledge, please encourage every young person who will be taking their exams later this year. Help them to revise well and to the best of their ability. Grant them wisdom and hope as they make plans for the future. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 15

Prince of Peace, we bring before you all those children living in conflict zones around the world. Please protect them from anxiety and stress. Enable them to grow to their full potential and make best use of their skills and abilities, we pray. Amen.

THURSDAY 16

Generous God, we pray for young people who are struggling to buy their own homes due to the high relative cost of housing. We ask that government policies like the Affordable Homes Programme will make buying a house less expensive for those wishing to buy their own property. Amen.



FRIDAY 17

Good Shepherd, we think of all young adults, those labelled as 'Millennials' or 'Generation Z', who find it difficult to get permanent employment. Please give them courage and hope in their troubles. Help them to find interesting and worthwhile work that they will enjoy. In your name, we pray. Amen.

SATURDAY 18

Our ever-present hope, we pray for young graduates who sometimes lack the social and communication skills needed in the workplace. Please give them the sense of awareness they need to enable them to become valuable and reliable employees in their place of work. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

MILLENIALS AND GENERATION Z

'Millennials' are defined as those who reached young adulthood in the early 21st century. They are sometimes referred to as 'Generation Y.' 'Generation Z', on the other hand, are those who were born between the mid-1990s to the early 2000s.

One of the major concerns for these younger generations has been a lack of affordable housing. This has resulted in large numbers of young people being unable to buy their own property. Instead they live in rented accomodation, which can be quite expensive. Another concern is their need to repay large amounts of student debt accumulated after several years of study.

'There are currently 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world. Also, 10% of the world's children live in conflict zones and 24 million of them are out of school. Political instability, labour market challenges and limited space for political and civic participation have led to increasing isolation of youth in societies.' (United Nations).

PARLIAMENT

January 19th - January 25th

'I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone; for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.' *1 Timothy 2: 1-2*



SUNDAY 19

There are 650 MPs from across the political spectrum that sit in the House of Commons. Of these, one is the Speaker with another being the Deputy Speaker. A total of 23 MPs sit in the Cabinet, with the same number sitting in the Shadow Cabinet.

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, bless and guide Elizabeth our Queen; give wisdom to all in authority and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and of peace; that men may honour one another and seek the common good. Amen.

MONDAY 20

In January 2019, MP Crispin Blunt tabled an Early Day Motion calling for an end to prayers in Parliament at the beginning of each day. He believed religious worship should not play any part in the formal business of the House of Commons. The motion attracted a total of 16 MPs out of a total of 650.

LORD of our lives, we give thanks for the ancient practice of parliamentary prayers at the start of each day. We ask that MPs will lay aside all prejudices and a desire to please and will lead the nation wisely. May your Spirit guide them, we pray. Amen.

TUESDAY 21

Christians in Politics is an all-party, nondenominational organisation that seeks to encourage and inspire Christians to get involved in politics and public life. Emphasis is placed on membership of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, instead of the earthly allegiances that often separate us.

CARING Saviour, we give thanks for the Christians in Politics organisation. Please give them wisdom as they seek to encourage and inspire Christians from all denominations to get involved in politics, whether at a local or national level. Amen.

Parliament consists of three central elements: the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Monarchy. The main business of Parliament takes place in these two Houses. Generally, the decisions made in one House have to be approved by the other. The main functions of the UK Parliament are to:

Check and challenge the work of the Government (scrutiny)

Make and change laws (legislation)

Debate the important issues of the day (debating)

Check and approve Government spending (budget/taxes)

Sittings in both Houses begin with Christian prayers. There is currently no multi-faith element and attendance is voluntary. This practice is believed to have started in about 1558 and was common practice by 1567. The present form of prayers probably dates from the reign of Charles II. During prayers, MPs and Peers stand facing the wall behind them. It is thought this practice developed due to the difficulty Members would historically have faced of kneeling to pray while wearing a sword. Members of the public are not allowed into the public galleries during this time.



WEDNESDAY 22

The Prime Minister answers questions from MPs in the Commons every sitting Wednesday from 12pm to 12.30pm. This is known as Prime Minister's Questions or PMQs. Any MP can ask a question of the Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition is the only MP permitted to ask more than one question and is allowed a maximum of six.

LIGHT of the Nations, we lift our Prime Minister to you now. May he be a man of wisdom and discretion who fears the Lord. We pray that he will have wise counsellors and be diligent in all he does. Amen.



THURSDAY 23

Over the last ten years or so, public distrust of politicians has increased markedly. This breakdown in trust can be linked back to the MPs expenses scandal that emerged in 2009. MPs were found to have been claiming for items such as toilet seats, television sets and light bulbs. The expose by the Daily Telegraph lasted for six weeks.

RIGHTEOUS Lord, we bring before you this breakdown in trust between MPs and the general public and pray that the situation can be reversed. We ask that, over time, politicians will regain the public's trust by acting with integrity in all they do. Amen.



FRIDAY 24

At the time of the expenses scandal, many MPs who had not made any fraudulent claims felt that the media's sensationalised coverage meant they were all "tarred with the same brush." Where previously their constituents would have trusted and believed them, that suddenly was not the case.

DEAR Father, we know your word teaches us that "whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." We pray that all our MPs will demonstrate clearly how they can be trusted. May those who have committed no wrong be treated fairly by the public and media alike. Amen.



SATURDAY 25

Constance Markievicz was the first woman elected to the House of Commons, in 1918. However, as a member of Sinn Fein, she did not take her seat. The first woman to be elected and take her seat was Nancy Astor in 1919. The UK's first female Prime Minister was Margaret Thatcher, who served in the role from 1979-1990. At the 2017 General Election, a total of 208 female MPs were elected.

LIBERATING Lord, we praise you that the number of female MPs has now risen to 208. We ask that they will feel valued and appreciated in the work they do. Please keep them safe from bullying or intimidation, we pray. Amen.

January 26th - February 1st

'Ruth asked him, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?" Boaz replied, 'I've been told all about what you have done; how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before." *Ruth 2: 10-11*



SUNDAY 26

Mighty Lord, we praise you for the way you miraculously rescued the people of Israel from the oppression of Egypt, then guided and provided for them for 40 years until they entered the Promised Land. As we journey through this life, may we remember that our true citizenship is in heaven. Amen.

MONDAY 27

Prince of Peace, we pray for the 4.5 million Britons who live abroad, with approximately 1.3 million living in Europe. We know they may feel insecure about the future due, either to Brexit, or for other reasons. Please grant them wisdom and strength as they decide what to do and where to go. Amen.

TUESDAY 28

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the king of all; govern the hearts and minds of those in authority and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 29

Almighty and everliving Saviour, whose Son Jesus Christ healed the sick and restored them to wholeness of life; look with compassion on the anguish of the world and by your healing power make whole both peoples and nations; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY 30

Merciful Lord, we bring the Rohingya people before you now. We realise that, at the peak of the crisis, thousands were crossing into Bangladesh on a daily basis. We pray that they can rebuild their lives and receive the protection and assistance they need. Amen.

FRIDAY 31

God of all comfort, we remember all the migrants living in Calais who are trying to cross the Channel from France to England. In doing so, we know they often put themselves and others at risk of harm. We pray for this dangerous activity to end. We ask also that people smugglers be prevented from pressuring migrants to attempt this illegal crossing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SATURDAY 1

Lord Jesus, we remember how you left your homeland with Mary and Joseph and fled to Egypt when you were a young child. In this way you experienced the life of a refugee. Help us to be aware of the anxiety, pain, sorrow and difficulties all refugees suffer, and to remember that we all belong to the same human family. In your name, we pray. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

MIGRATION

Human migration is the movement of people to settle, permanently or temporarily, at a new location, often over long distances. Those leaving due to natural disaster or civil disturbance are classed as refugees, or displaced persons if they remain within the same country. Others migrate in search of economic stability and employment. Those fleeing from political, religious, or other forms of persecution are called asylum seekers.

A large number of Rohingya refugees fled violence in Myanmar in 2017 and the numbers keep growing. Over 742,000 have escaped to Bangladesh since 25 August 2017. Most walked for days through jungles and mountains. They arrived exhausted, hungry and sick; in need of both international protection and humanitarian assistance.

Illegal migrants attempting to cross the English Channel by boarding small boats was rare before November 2018. People stowing away on trains, trucks or ferryboats was much more common. These migrants often came from the "Calais jungle", a refugee and migrant encampment in the vicinity of Calais, France. It existed from January 2015 to October 2016.

February 2nd - February 8th

'Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future hope and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.' *Proverbs 24:19-20*

SUNDAY 2

Caring Lord, we thank you for the efforts our government has already made to counter the threat of extremism in our nation. Nevertheless, we pray that you would ensure that the freedom of people to talk publicly about their beliefs and to voice their views, however unpopular they may be, is upheld in our nation. Amen.



MONDAY 3

Lord Jesus, please help us as we seek to understand individuals of different faiths. Encourage people in all communities across the UK to work together to uphold the fundamental rights the UK is built on; including freedom of speech and the right to practice their faith. Amen.

TUESDAY 4

Merciful Father, fill us with your Holy Spirit that we might express your forgiveness, love, compassion and peace to all we meet. Help us to stand against anti-Semitism within the UK and stretch out a hand of friendship to those who are different from us. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 5

Sovereign Lord, thank you for the decision of Ben Wallace MP to announce an independent review of the Prevent strategy. Please lead those in authority to make the right decisions in relation to this counter-extremism legislation. Amen.

THURSDAY 6

Loving Saviour, please protect all our children from the risk of radicalisation. Help them to raise questions in a safe environment at school and home and to think critically about political and religious ideologies. Equip parents and teachers with the necessary skills to challenge and guide our young people. Amen.

FRIDAY 7

Light of the Nations, we pray for Sara Khan and ask that you give her insight and wisdom in her new role. May she bring her experience and knowledge to the commission as it works to identify and challenge extremism and provide our government with independent advice. Amen.

SATURDAY 8

Prince of Peace, thank you for the reduction in extremist incidents in the UK during 2019. We pray for this to continue throughout 2020 and beyond. May the Police forces throughout the UK be successful in countering extremism in its many and varied forms. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

COUNTER-EXTREMISM

In January 2018, the Home Office announced Sara Khan would be the new lead Commissioner of the Commission for Countering Extremism. Ms Khan took up her post the following month and the role is for a period of three years. The Commission has a clear remit to support the Government, public sector, civil and wider society to identify and challenge all forms of extremism. They will also promote British values, including ensuring women's rights are upheld.

Of the four 'Ps' that frame the UK's counter-terrorist strategy; Pursue, Prepare, Protect and Prevent, the latter is by far the most controversial. It places a responsibility on certain bodies, including schools, to have due regard of the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This includes both violent and non-violent extremism.

On 22 January 2019, the then security minister, Ben Wallace, announced that Prevent would be independently reviewed in accordance with an amendment to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill currently making its way through parliament.

PRAYER

February 9th - February 15th

'Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.'

SUNDAY 9

How strong is our persuasion and belief that God can and will revive his people today? The Bible tells us to be persistent in prayer and not to give up. Jesus also tells us to "ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

LORD Jesus, whenever we feel like giving up on prayer, please restore our vision of who you are. Renew our strength to keep believing and revive our faint hearts to press on with courage and faith, that your will be done. Amen.

Many Christians have witnessed an overall decline in Western church attendance. Because of this, many church members can lose heart and maybe even consider giving up. Popular modern attitudes criticising the church can feed in to this feeling of negativity.

Paul tells us in Romans ch15v4 that there are lessons for Christians in Old Testament incidents. Those engaged in revitalising weary and dying churches can find encouragement and hope in Nehemiah's rehabilitation of Jerusalem many centuries ago. However, it can take much prayer to rejuvenate churches that have lost their sense of vision and mission. And it is no less challenging than the task Nehemiah faced in Jerusalem.

Christians are reminded that Jesus is our model for intercessory prayer. He stands before God and between Him and sinful man, just as the Old Testament priests did. 1 Timothy ch2v5 reminds us "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

MONDAY 10

The word doxology comes from the Greek word doxologos, which means 'uttering praise.' The dictionary definition is a hymn, verse, or form of words in Christian liturgy glorifying God. Biblical examples that are frequently used include: Hebrews ch13v20-21 and Jude v24-25.

FAITHFUL God, we praise you and we worship you. Thank you for giving us the amazing privilege of prayer. May we be inspired and led by your Holy Spirit whenever we come before you with our worship, thanksgiving, confession and intercession. Amen.

TUESDAY 11

Prayer is powerful precisely because God can and God will. He can answer because he is all-powerful. He will answer because he promises to keep his covenant.

HOLY Spirit, thank you for every answered prayer. Help us always to recognise the ways in which you act in the many situations we bring to you. Enable us to speak out because of our gratitude and praise. Thank you for healing and provision and for every other expression of mercy and grace. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 12

In the gospel of Matthew chapter 6, as part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. This prayer has become known by Christians and non-Christians alike as 'The Lord's Prayer.'

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith. Open our minds and our hearts so that our thoughts, affections and will may be pure, robust and joyful and forever forgiving. In Jesus' name. Amen.

THURSDAY 13

Prayers of penitence can be either individual or corporate. They normally involve recognition of a 'sin of omission' or 'sin of commission' and a desire for forgiveness. Some Christian traditions also include the practice of private confession with a vicar or priest.

OUR friend and redeemer, please forgive us when we sin against you and against our fellow men. Whether in thought, word or deed, through negligence, weakness or our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and pray that we may serve you better, to the glory of your name. Amen.

FRIDAY 14

The Bible tells us to pray for those in trouble or need. This is known as intercessory prayer. The Biblical basis for this is our calling as priests. In the Old Testament, the priests stood before God to make sacrifices for people's sins. In 1 Peter ch2 v5+9, Christians are described as being both a 'holy priesthood' and a 'royal priesthood.'

CARING Saviour, we remember those struggling against injustice. Also for the men and women who have to establish themselves in often violent and oppressive societies. May they be filled with your wisdom in their war against inhumanity. In your name. Amen.



SATURDAY 15

Christians can very easily lose faith or have doubts when people they know are suffering with illness of some kind. Whether physical or mental, ill health has the potential to make us anxious and lose that feeling of well-being. However, we also know the healing ministry of Jesus was pivotal to his mission and he wants to restore those who pray in faith.

GOD of all comfort, we pray for those we know who are sick in body, mind or spirit. Please let your healing touch be upon them. Restore them to a measure of health and strength. In their suffering, may they be aware of your peace, "which passes all understanding." Amen.

February 16th - February 22nd

Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' *Genesis 1:26*



SUNDAY 16

Dear Lord, when you made the sea and all the creatures that live in it, you said that it was "good." Forgive us for having indulged our selfish desires to the detriment of your creation. Show us where we should change our consumer habits so that we protect your world instead of damaging it. Amen.

MONDAY 17

God our Creator, please give skill and ingenuity to people working in the cosmetics industry so they can find natural alternatives to microbeads. Bless those cosmetics companies who are already working to phase out microbeads and cause others to follow their example. Amen.

TUESDAY 18

Father Almighty, thank you for the skill of researchers looking into the environmental impact of microplastics. We pray that their research influences nations across Europe and around the world to take action to ensure the protection of both the marine environment and human health. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 19

Lord Jesus, thank you that the Government's ban on cosmetic and other products containing microbeads has now come into effect. Give wisdom to the Environment Secretary, Theresa Villiers, as she considers how to tackle other microplastic pollution in the marine environment. Amen.

THURSDAY 20

Generous God, we ask that government will seriously consider instigating a wholesale review of UK waste prevention policies. May people become more aware of how widely microbeads are used and encourage companies to seek natural alternatives wherever possible. Amen.

FRIDAY 21

Sovereign Lord, we pray that the UK government will continue being a positive influence to other countries around the world in tackling all forms of plastic waste. We pray for the ban on microbeads to be extended to all microplastics in products that can reach the drain; such as flushable wet wipes, detergents and make-up. Amen.

SATURDAY 22

Blessed Lord, you made the heavens, the earth, the seas and all that is in them. Yet we have damaged the earth and the seas by failing to rule over them responsibly. May we do our part to fight against pollution and preserve and protect the habitats of all the earth's creatures. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

MICROPLASTICS

Microplastics are tiny plastic particles, generally smaller than 5mm, which enter the ocean. Their small size means they can be eaten by marine life, thus potentially transferring harmful chemicals to and from the marine environment. It is estimated that 15-51 trillion microplastic particles have accumulated in the ocean. Microplastics arise from various sources including the breakdown of large plastic waste and synthetic fibres in clothes and tyres.

A UK-wide prohibition on the use of plastic microbeads in the manufacture of some cosmetic and personal care products came into effect in January 2018. They are added to rinseoff products such as face scrubs, toothpastes and shower gels. After being washed down the drain, they often pass through wastewater treatment plants before ending up in the seas. They do not degrade over time and can transport toxic chemicals into marine organisms. Growing concern over the impact of these tiny plastic beads on marine life convinced the government to act. A full ban on the sale of products containing microbeads came into force in July 2018.

February 23rd - November 29th

'He was in the desert for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and angels attended him.' *Mark 1:13*

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SUNDAY 23

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those that are penitent. Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect forgiveness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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MONDAY 24

All powerful Lord, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness and was tempted as we are, yet without sin; give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY 25

Merciful Saviour, we know that fasting can be a good thing and that you are pleased when we repent of sinful habits. Help us to be aware of our need to repent every day and not just during this time of Lent. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 26

Bread of Life, when we think of Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, help us to use it as a day of preparation for the time of fasting that is to follow. May we be reminded how you instructed us that our fasting should be done in secret and not be obvious to other people. Amen.

THURSDAY 27

Faithful God, help us to remember that Lent should not be a time to boast about our sacrifices or try and earn your favour. May we always know that your love for us could not be any greater than it is already. Amen.

FRIDAY 28

Liberating Father, we pray that more Christians will be encouraged to fast and take the season of Lent seriously. In doing so, may they come to identify more closely with your Son, Jesus "who was tempted in every way, just as we are; yet was without sin". Amen.

SATURDAY 29 Lord God Almighty, grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God; through Jesus

Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

LENT

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and lasts for forty days. As the date of Easter changes each year, this means the date of Ash Wednesday changes as well. In practice, Ash Wednesday starts as early as February 6th or as late as March 9th.

Lent is intended as a time of fasting and self-denial in preparation for the celebration of Easter. By "giving something up for Lent", Christians remember when Jesus was in the desert for forty days, being tempted by the Devil (recorded in Matthew chapter 4 and Luke chapter 4). In some small way, they can identify, not only with Jesus' struggles, but also how he dealt with the temptations that were put before him.

However, if Christians choose to fast, Jesus says we ought to do it discreetly. It should not be obvious to others that we are fasting, but only to our Father in heaven.



Thought for the Week THE NATIONWIDE CHRISTIAN TRUST

A weekly video brought to you by Chris Hill



God isn't just for Sunday!

He is loving and concerned about everything that happens, in every part of the world, both day and night. He has revealed that love and care in many ways, especially in revealing his truth and will in his Word - the Bible. For example, the Psalmist tells us that 'Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path' (Psalm 119:105).

But we are living in a world where many ignore God and are ignorant of his Word. The Bible has been described as 'the least read best seller'! But we desperately need to have God's wisdom and to know God's mind in many everyday situations.

'Thought for the Week' aims to bring God's word to more people, young and old, who are concerned with the events, problems and challenges that we all face. In a brief, four-minute 'thought' week by week, we pray that doubt is replaced with hope and fear with confidence.

We hope you will be blessed by listening to 'Thought for the Week' and will pass the message on to others.

> Visit: www.nationwidechristiantrust.com Click on Thought for the Week and fill in the simple on-line form Or call: 01277 365 398 option 4

While the Prayer Guide is provided free of charge, there is obviously a cost involved in producing it. You may like to prayerfully consider making a small donation towards this resource. *Thank you again for standing with us in prayer*

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