



PRAYER GUIDE

FOR
Parliament
AND THE
Nation

December
January
February
2019



The
Nationwide
Christian Trust

GAMBLING

There are an estimated 430,000 problem gamblers in the UK, including 25,000 11-16-year olds. For this reason, it has been suggested that a significant overhaul of UK gambling legislation is needed to protect both adults and children.

In September 2018, the Labour Party outlined proposals to outlaw in-play betting adverts to help combat the UK's problem gambling epidemic. Their new proposals would ban TV and online gambling promotions during live sporting events. Bookmakers would still be able to offer odds on sporting events during play. However, they would not be allowed to advertise them for a specified period before and after games or during breaks.

In addition, Labour made a repeated call for Premier League football clubs to cease sponsorship deals with gambling firms, pledging legislation if they do not act voluntarily. Deputy Labour Party leader Tom Watson described problem gambling as 'a public health emergency.'

According to Labour's research, 9 out of 20 (45%) Premier League teams and 17 out of 24 (70%) Championship teams are sponsored by gambling companies. In total, across the top two leagues in the UK, 59% of teams have gambling companies as their sponsors. There is also a risk that, as well as

normalising gambling for adults, advertising on football shirts enables gambling companies to sidestep the ban on advertising to children.

CONTINUE TO PRAY, particularly for children who have become problem gamblers. Pray that the Government can come up with proposals for improving current gambling legislation which also helps to address and reduce the amount of gambling advertising. Pray also for independent bodies such as 'When the Fun Stops, Stop' and 'BeGambleAware,' that are set up to promote responsible gambling standards.

CHRISTMAS

The build up to Christmas gathers pace in early December with many companies having their staff Christmas parties during the first three weeks of December. Shops stay open for longer and consumer spending increases dramatically in the days leading up to 25th December. In addition, people often take up to two weeks off work during the festive period. This allows them to recharge their batteries and also to visit friends and family. However, amid all the hustle and bustle in the run-up to Christmas, churches throughout the country will be putting on carol services. These services re-tell the timeless message of the Incarnation. Combined with the singing of familiar carols, they prove popular with both regular and occasional churchgoers.

CONTINUE TO PRAY that church and cathedral carol services across the country will be well attended. Pray that, amid all the spending and partying taking place, people will stop to ponder the true meaning of the Christmas season.

Various predictions have been made about how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics will change the world of work over the next 20 years. On the one hand, experts believe that many people such as office workers, drivers and factory workers will be made redundant as robots increasingly take on human jobs. On the other hand, robots and AI have the potential to benefit the world. They have the potential to free humans from repetitive and hazardous tasks and bring innovation to industry, transport, food production and many other spheres of life.

Robots of various kinds have been taking over aspects of our lives for a long time. Car plants, for example, have used industrial robots on manufacturing and assembly lines for many years. This has enabled manufacturers to achieve much higher standards of reliability and quality control. In addition, they have been used to perform repetitive roles that involve lifting and twisting.

The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) was designed to serve the redeveloped Docklands area of East London. It has had driverless trains since it first started in 1987. The system uses minimal staffing on trains and at major interchange stations. The four below ground stations are staffed to comply with underground station fire and safety requirements.

Since trains first started running on the DLR, there has only been one reported accident. This was on 22 April 1991, where two trains collided at a junction on the West India Quay bridge during the morning rush hour. This required a shutdown of the system and evacuation of passengers by ladder. One train was travelling automatically, while the other was under manual control.

There has also been an ongoing debate since 2012 about the merits (or otherwise) of running the London Underground with driverless trains. This would enable easier running of the Night Tube, as drivers would not have to work anti-social hours. In addition, trains would be able to run more frequently than at present.

However, possible downsides include the difficulty of introducing driverless trains on existing lines. This is due to issues with signalling when trains, both with and without drivers, are running at the same time. There has also been criticism from unions over safety and cost, as well as the accompanying reduction in staffing levels.

Partially automated trains are currently used on four underground lines (Jubilee, Central, Victoria and Northern). These trains still require operators to open and close doors and to assist in case of emergency. This method of working will be extended to the other underground lines by 2022.

Driverless vehicles are another area where the use of AI or robotics could be applied. Possible advantages include: an easing of congestion, a fall in vehicle emissions and provision of better mobility for elderly and disabled people. The potential of this technology is quite new and there are similar Health and Safety concerns to those of driverless trains.

These concerns were reinforced by two accidents in March 2018. In the first, Walter Huang was killed in California when his Tesla Model X crashed into a motorway barrier and caught fire. In the second, Elaine Herzberg was killed in Arizona when she was struck by an SUV Volvo. In both instances the cause of the accident was not immediately obvious. However, the limitations of self-driving technology were given as a reason for what happened.

WELCOME TO OUR PRAYER GUIDE

2018 is the 100th anniversary of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols held in King's College Chapel in Cambridge. The ceremony was first held on Christmas Eve 1918 and includes a mixture of carols and readings from the Bible. The opening carol is always 'Once in Royal David's City' and a new, specially commissioned carol is always sung.

Eric Milner-White who, at the age of 34, had just been appointed Dean of King's College planned the first service. Previous experience as an army chaplain convinced him that the Church of England needed a more imaginative approach to worship.

The BBC first broadcast the service of Nine Lessons and Carols on the radio in 1928. With the exception of 1930, it has been broadcast annually, even during the Second World War, when the ancient glass (and all the heat!) had been removed from the Chapel. The service is now heard by millions of people around the world. It is distinct from 'Carols from King's', which is a shorter carol service, with different music and readings. It is pre-recorded for BBC television and is also broadcast on Christmas Eve.

The wedding of the Queen's granddaughter Princess Eugenie to Jack Brooksbank took place at St George's Chapel, Windsor on 12th October. This was the same church where Prince Harry and the Duchess of Sussex were married in May this year. The service was led by the Dean of Windsor, The Rt Revd. David Conner. The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu led the prayers. Prince George was a pageboy and Princess Charlotte a bridesmaid.

With the exception of the Duchess of Cornwall, who had a long-standing engagement in Scotland and Prince Louis, all senior members of the Royal Family were in attendance. Several celebrities were also present. They included Pippa Middleton, Stephen Fry, Robbie Williams and Kate Moss.

In addition, representatives from the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, the Teenage Cancer Trust, the Salvation Army and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women were on the guest list. These are all charities that the Princess supports.

The Princess's full title is Princess Eugenie Victoria Helena of York. She is the Queen's sixth grandchild and is currently ninth in the line of succession.

May God 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 Smith
PRAYER GUIDE EDITOR

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.

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BULLYING

'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.' *Psalms 138: 7*



SUNDAY 25

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Saviour gave his back to the smiters and did not hide his face from shame; give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



MONDAY 26

Caring Father, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that, because of the frailty of our nature, we cannot always stand upright. Give us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



TUESDAY 27

Compassionate Saviour, we bring before you those who have been affected by cyber bullying either online or through smartphones and tablets. We pray that you will heal them from any hurt they may have experienced and bring them a measure of your peace "which passes all understanding." Amen.



WEDNESDAY 28

Lord of love, please comfort and heal those women and girls who have been bullied or sexually harassed. Provide victims and their families with appropriate support and prevent the serious psychological, emotional and physical consequences of bullying from destroying their future. Amen.



THURSDAY 29

Light of the World, we pray for all schools to take a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying. Give them wisdom to recognise any signs of bullying and be able to act accordingly to prevent it from spreading. Amen.



FRIDAY 30

Righteous Judge, we bring before you all those who are bullied at work. We pray that their self-confidence and health will not be badly affected by this negative behaviour. Enable them to get the help and advice they need to deal with this issue in a positive and long-term way. Amen.



SATURDAY 1

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent. Help us to forgive those who have bullied us for our faith in you. Give us grace to endure what can sometimes be very unpleasant, in the knowledge that you will watch over us and keep us safe. Amen.

In schools there is no legal definition of bullying. However, it's usually defined as behaviour that is repeated, intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally and is often aimed at certain groups. This may be due to their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

It takes many forms and can include: physical assault, teasing, making threats, name calling and 'cyber bullying' (that is bullying via mobile phone or online).

Within the workplace it may involve arguments and rudeness, but it can also be more subtle. Excluding and ignoring people and their contribution, unacceptable criticisms and overloading people with work are other forms of bullying.

Bullying can make working life miserable. Employees lose all faith in themselves, they may feel ill and depressed and find it hard to motivate themselves to work.

Bullying isn't always a case of someone picking on the weak. Sometimes a person's strengths in the workplace can make the bully feel threatened and that triggers their behaviour.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

HOUSE OF LORDS

The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK Parliament. It is independent from and complements the work of the elected House of Commons. It has three main roles.

Members spend more than half their time in the House considering bills. These have to be considered by both Houses of Parliament before they can become law. During several stages, members examine each bill, line-by-line, before it becomes an Act of Parliament. These bills often cover areas such as welfare, health and education.

Members also use their extensive individual experience to investigate public policy. Much of this work is done in select committees; small groups appointed to consider specific policy areas. Many select committee meetings involve questioning expert witnesses working in a specific field. These meetings are open to the public.

Members scrutinise the work of government during question time and debates in the chamber, where government ministers must respond. The public is welcome to visit and sit in the galleries overlooking the chamber during business.

December 2nd - December 8th

'Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.' *Romans 13: 1*



SUNDAY 2

After winning the election in 1997, Labour began its plans to make the Lords more democratic and representative; the first stage of which was the removal of hereditary peers. This was achieved by the 1999 House of Lords Act, which received Royal assent on 11 November 1999. However, an important amendment allowed 92 hereditary peers to remain members of the Lords for an interim period.

FATHER God, we pray for all peers in the House of Lords. Give them wisdom to use their experience wisely in examining and improving proposed government legislation. Amen.



MONDAY 3

The Life Peerages Act 1958 enabled women to become peers for the first time. Existing peers generally welcomed this move as it seemed mistaken to have a legislative chamber that excluded 50% of the UK population.

JUST and caring Saviour, we thank you that women have been represented in the House of Lords since 1958. We ask that they can apply their many skills and talents to benefit the UK as a whole, particularly during the continuing Brexit discussions. Amen.



TUESDAY 4

While various Brexit legislation was being debated and voted on in the House of Commons in July, many felt that the House of Lords was overstepping the mark in amending the legislation and 'sending it back' to the House of Commons for another vote.

MERCIFUL Lord, we bring before you tensions between the House of Lords and the House of Commons over the Brexit legislation. We know that the House of Lords has a majority for 'Remain.' Therefore we ask that both sides respect the referendum result and any Brexit legislation that is passed by the House of Commons. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 5

The House of Lords currently has a total of 793 members who can scrutinise bills, investigate government activity through committee work and question government through oral questions and debates. This includes 249 Conservative, 188 Labour, 98 Liberal Democrat and 26 bishops. These bishops are known as the 'Lords Spiritual.'

HOLY Spirit, may the 26 bishops who form the 'Lords Spiritual' be influenced and guided by your presence. May they speak truth to power and may their views be listened to and respected by other members of the House of Lords. Amen.



THURSDAY 6

As well as sitting in the public gallery to watch debates, members of the public can also attend and observe select committee meetings. This is where investigations look into specialist subjects, taking advantage of the Lords' expertise and the greater amount of time (compared to MPs) available to them to examine issues. Examples include the science and technology and economic affairs committees.

ALL-KNOWING Saviour, we thank you for the privilege that the public have to observe debates and better understand the workings of the House of Lords. Help us not to take this for granted but to be grateful that we live in a free and open society. Amen.



FRIDAY 7

The Queen's Speech at the State Opening of Parliament marks the formal start of the parliamentary year. It sets out the government's agenda for the coming session, outlining proposed policies and legislation. It is the only regular occasion when the three constituent parts of Parliament, the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, meet. The Queen delivers her speech from the Throne in the House of Lords. Although the Queen reads the Speech, the government writes it.

CARING God, please 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 people may honour one another and seek the common good. Amen.



SATURDAY 8

In June 2017, Theresa May cancelled the 2018 State Opening of Parliament. This was in order to opt for a two-year Parliamentary session instead of the usual one-year session and was intended to reduce the amount of potential unrest or instability related to Brexit legislation. It last happened in 2011 when the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition decided on a two-year Parliamentary sitting.

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.

December 9th - December 15th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

'Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.' *Proverbs 22: 26-27*

HOUSEHOLD DEBT



SUNDAY 9

Merciful Lord, we know there will be significant spending taking place in the run up to Christmas, both in physical shops and online. We pray that consumers will be sensible with their spending and not build up large debts that take many months to repay. Amen.



MONDAY 10

Compassionate Saviour, we know how parents are pressured each year to buy their children the latest "must have" gift. We ask that they will not be compelled to spend what they feel are inappropriate amounts of money on presents that are not really needed. Amen.



TUESDAY 11

Father of all, we remember how stressful it can be when families overspend and fall into debt. Give them wisdom to understand the consequences of being in debt. Enable them to seek help at an early stage before the problems become more serious. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 12

Gracious God, we bring before you UK households who are in debt due to gambling by adults and children alike. We pray that steps can be taken to reduce the half a million children who gamble online each week. We ask that they will be encouraged to seek help to prevent their gambling from getting out of control. Amen.



THURSDAY 13

Generous Lord, we pray for those who have had to spend some of their savings, as interest rates on these accounts have been very low for many years. We ask that rates for savers will become more competitive during 2019, to encourage people to increase their saving activity. Amen.



FRIDAY 14

Faithful one, we bring before you the almost three million people across the UK who struggle with severe debt. We ask that you will help them find ways to make their debt more manageable. Help them to resist the temptation to be part of a "buy now, pay later" culture, but to be careful with their spending. Amen.



SATURDAY 15

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Amen.

Households in the United Kingdom are borrowing more money than they are saving, for the first time since the so-called "Lawson boom" in the 1980's, the credit rating agency Fitch has warned. Households overspent their income by about £900 in 2017, according to the Office for National Statistics. The amount of debt consumers are taking on is rising at nearly 10% a year, while average earnings are up by less than 3%. This suggests the debt burden is increasing rapidly. Any interest rate rises may cause further financial stress for consumers. This may also store up problems for the future, as consumer spending has helped support the economy in recent years.

In order to close the gap between outgoings and earnings, households have turned to borrowing and cut back on saving activity. However, since the Bank of England raised interest rates by 0.25% to 0.50% in August, there is a belief that borrowing will gradually become more expensive over the next few years.

'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' 2 Timothy 3: 16-17

THE BIBLE



SUNDAY 16

Living Saviour, we praise you that Bible reading 'apps' are available on smart phones to enable people to access your Word while they are 'on the move.' Let them be encouraged to study the Bible in greater depth and to gain an improved understanding of both the Old and the New Testament. Amen.



MONDAY 17

Almighty God, who gave grace to your apostles to truly believe and preach your word; grant that your Church may love that word and may faithfully preach and receive the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



TUESDAY 18

Loving Father, we give thanks for the Gideons who distribute more than 800,000 Bibles in the UK and up to 90 million worldwide. Please give people of all ages the desire to discover your word, maybe for the first time and to be blessed and challenged through reading it. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 19

Dear Lord, we want to praise you for the wide range of daily Bible reading notes that are available for Christians to use. We pray for those who write them and ask that people will be encouraged to study your Word and to look into it in more detail. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



THURSDAY 20

God of mercy, we thank you for the Alpha course which allows honest seekers to read the Bible and explore the Christian faith in a relaxed and welcoming manner. We pray for those who attend these courses. We ask that the talks will be engaging and inspire conversation as they explore what the Christian faith is all about. Amen.



FRIDAY 21

Light of the World, we realise that everyone needs a little help when reading the Bible. Please help us to understand what we are reading. Help us also to remember what we read and relate it to modern day issues and events. Amen.



SATURDAY 22

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Bible is a collection of 66 different books and letters. It was written over a period of around 1,500 years, up to about 100 years after Christ's death and resurrection. It is divided into the Old Testament (the first 39 books) and the New Testament (the last 27 books). The word testament means covenant or agreement; so the Bible shows how God's old agreement, based on the 'covenant of law,' is superseded by the new 'covenant of grace' as shown in the New Testament.

The first 39 books of the Bible tell the story of God's creation, man's rebellion and prophesy the coming of Christ.

The second section of the Bible starts with the four Gospels and the book of Acts, where we learn about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament is the foundation of the Christian faith because it's here that we see how Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled.

The Bible itself has been translated into more than 2,300 languages and is the world's best-selling book.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Since the David Attenborough programme Blue Planet 2 was broadcast in autumn 2017, there has been near universal agreement of the need to cut out the unnecessary use of plastic. But this is only the first step. The European Union recycled less than one-third of its plastic waste in 2014. Individuals and organisations need to use materials that are easier to recycle and to make better use of plastics that are thrown away. Currently only 1 in 400 disposable plastic coffee cups are recycled. There have been suggestions of introducing a levy of 25p per cup to discourage their use.

There's no doubt that plastics have made our lives safer and easier over the past fifty years. But their durability and ever-present nature brings a huge cost to the environment. The world produces roughly 320 million tonnes of plastic every year, with more than 40% of it destined to become single-use packaging. Some of this plastic is clearly unnecessary, a blatant waste of resources and energy.

December 23rd - December 29th

'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.'

Psalms 24: 1-2



SUNDAY 23

Many different types of plastic are used in a variety of applications. Examples include HDPE, PET and PVC. However, some types are more easily recycled than others. This often results in plastics ending up in landfill or in the seas and oceans, where they can have a devastating effect on marine life.

GRACIOUS Lord, please give wisdom to researchers and plastics manufacturers as they seek to make more types of plastic recyclable. Help them find ways to extract more value from these materials, we pray. Amen.



MONDAY 24

As concern over plastic pollution rises, there has been a noticeable increase in customers returning to traditional glass bottle milk deliveries. This is particularly true for 'millennials' who want to translate their environmental awareness into practical action.

CARING Saviour, thank you that younger consumers and families are embracing traditional milk deliveries as a way of demonstrating their care for the environment. Let them be an example for others to follow in being more aware of their responsibilities. Amen.



TUESDAY 25

The UK's ten biggest supermarkets are being encouraged to reduce the amount of avoidable plastic waste they currently use. Everything from a 5p charge for single-use plastic bags, the use of biodegradable cotton buds and the removal of polystyrene from fish packaging are measures being used to decrease supermarkets' plastic consumption.

BREAD of Heaven, give supermarkets the wisdom to know how best to reduce the amount of plastic packaging they use without compromising food quality. Let them be encouraged to find new ways to reduce their reliance on single-use plastics and boost recycling rates. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 26

Since the 5p charge on supermarket plastic bags was introduced in England in October 2015, there has been an 83% reduction in their use. However, plans to double the plastic bag tax to 10p have been opposed by the Treasury as they believe this would look like profiteering. In addition, only retailers with more than 250 employees have to charge shoppers a minimum of 5p for the bags they provide.

CREATOR God, we ask that governments can find intelligent and imaginative ways to further reduce the use of plastic carrier bags. We pray that consumers can be encouraged to use more recyclables and buy fruit and vegetables loose in paper bags. Amen.



THURSDAY 27

Butler & Butler, a clerical clothing manufacturer, has started selling a men's cassock made from 100% recycled polyester made from reclaimed PET bottles. The company first began selling the clothing in May 2018. Director of the company, the Rev Simon Butler, came up with the idea following the Blue Planet TV series which highlighted the issue of plastic waste in the oceans.

RIGHTEOUS Father, help us always to have a concern for the environment as a practical outworking of our Christian faith. Enable us to be responsible stewards of your creation and to encourage others to do the same. Amen.



FRIDAY 28

In January 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May unveiled the Conservative Government's 25-year environmental plan. This plan promised to eradicate avoidable plastic use by 2042 in order to leave the "natural environment in a better state than we found it." It also highlighted the need to make the world's oceans cleaner and healthier "by tackling the scourge of plastic waste."

NAME above all names, we pray for you to show the UK government how best to implement their 25-year environmental plan. Give them the tools they need to eradicate or drastically reduce avoidable plastic use and help make the oceans cleaner and healthier. Amen.



SATURDAY 29

The National Audit Office says that over half of packaging reported as recycled is actually being processed abroad. Because of this, the government has little idea whether the recycled plastics are being converted into new products, buried in landfill or incinerated.

LORD Jesus, we are reminded that the earth and everything in it is yours. Help us to forego our demand for plastics and move towards behaviours that are environmentally healthy. Help us to follow your example and care for the world you love. Amen.

December 30th - January 5th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

THE ELDERLY

'Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone.' *Psalms 71: 9*



SUNDAY 30

Merciful Father, we pray that proper provision is made for an ageing population in the UK. Let people be encouraged to learn new skills and to remain both physically and mentally active. Help them to realise the opportunities they have to serve others which may not have been available previously. Amen.



MONDAY 31

Everlasting Lord, we pray for older people who are moving to the stage where they need increasing support and care. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Amen.



TUESDAY 1

Generous God, we pray for the increasing numbers of older people living in rural areas. We ask that ways can be found to care for them. We pray also that they can continue to have straightforward access to services such as GPs, hospitals, banks and post offices. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 2

Creator and Father of all, we pray for those who are elderly and do not feel as well as they used to. Bless them and those who serve their needs; that they may put their whole trust in you and be filled with your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



THURSDAY 3

Dear Lord, we ask that you will be especially close to older people who are often less mobile and sometimes find it difficult to get out. We pray that they will know your presence and not feel isolated in the communities where they live. Amen.



FRIDAY 4

Compassionate Saviour, we bring before you elderly citizens who don't have access to the Internet and feel 'left out' when it comes to using new technology. Let ways be found to enable them to understand the benefits of this technology and if it is worthwhile for them to use it more. Amen.



SATURDAY 5

Creator God, we are reminded that even when we retire from paid employment you still have work for us to do. Please encourage everyone in retirement to use the wealth of experience and extra time that they have to invest in your Kingdom. Also, to encourage and mentor young people to help bring about your purposes for the world. Amen.

The UK population is projected to grow from 65.6 million in 2016 to 74 million in 2039. While it is increasing, improvements in healthcare and lifestyles mean the population is getting older. In the UK in 2016, 18% of people were aged 65 and over and 2.4% were aged 85 and over.

In 1996 there were no local authorities with more than 3% of their population aged 85 and over. In 2006, most authorities had 2-3% of their local population aged 85 and over. In 2016, more than half of local authorities had over 3% of their population aged 85 and over.

Between 1996 and 2016, coastal areas throughout the UK tended to have higher proportions of people aged over 65 and aged over 85. Projections suggest this will change and more inland areas will have higher proportions of older people too, although London and surrounding areas will remain among the lowest.

January 6th - January 12th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

EDUCATION

'Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.' *Proverbs 4: 13*



SUNDAY 6

Father God, thank you that our state school system enables all children, regardless of background and socio-economic status, to enter education. Please provide solutions to the ongoing need for additional school places, so that all the children in our nation can be guaranteed a good education in their school of choice. Amen.



MONDAY 7

Lord of Hope, please comfort and refresh all teachers who are feeling exhausted or burnt out as a result of unmanageable workloads. Lead the government to address the issues surrounding retention of staff to prevent further loss of experienced, dedicated and talented professionals. Amen.



TUESDAY 8

Lord Jesus, thank you that so many Christians have the desire to influence education. Bless them in their work. Raise up more Christians to work in education either as teachers, governors, parent helpers or support workers. Use them, we pray, to instruct and train our children in the ways of righteousness. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 9

Gentle Saviour, we are reminded in the first five verses of Matthew's gospel chapter 18 how Jesus affirmed each child he met. He also encouraged us to be more like them. Help us to affirm children and encourage them to live for Jesus in their school and with their peers. Thank you for their childlike boldness to share the truth of Christianity. Amen.



THURSDAY 10

Sovereign Lord, we pray that schools throughout the UK will teach a balanced curriculum without bias towards any particular faith group. We ask that pupils are kept safe from extremist views and allowed to develop their own opinions and beliefs in a safe environment. Amen.



FRIDAY 11

Faithful One, thank you that action is being taken to tackle the potential risk of young people being radicalised in school. Please give wisdom to the Department for Education in ensuring that the school curriculum does correctly reflect British values for all primary and secondary age children. Amen.



SATURDAY 12

Gracious Father, we remember all those working for the Department for Education. Please guide and lead this ministerial department. Give them wisdom and skill to generate policies and plans that support children and young people. Enable them to fulfil their safeguarding role by ensuring that local services protect and support children. Amen.

The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. The DfE is a ministerial department supported by 19 agencies, public bodies and non-ministerial departments. Staff are based at ministerial offices in London and in a number of other locations around England.

They work closely with national and local agencies who look after children, local authorities and professionals who work in schools, further and higher education institutions, children's services and health services. Responsibilities include teaching and learning for children and young people in early years, primary schools and secondary schools.

In addition, they are responsible for teaching, learning and training for young people and adults in apprenticeships, traineeships and further education, plus helping disadvantaged children and young people to achieve more. In terms of safeguarding, their role is to ensure that local services protect and support children.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union is a political and economic union of 28 countries (or member states) and covers more than four million square kilometres. It grew out of a desire for peace in a war-torn and divided continent.

Five years after World War II ended, France and Germany came up with a plan to ensure their two countries would never go to war against each other again. The result was a deal signed by six nations to pool their coal and steel resources in 1950. After the UK joined what was then called the European Economic Community in January 1973, the EEC had a total of nine countries. The member states in the EU have a total of more than 510 million citizens. The euro is the common currency in 19 member states.

The UK is due to leave the European Union on 29 March 2019.

January 13th - January 19th

'Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no-one, to be peaceable and considerate and to show true humility towards all men.' *Titus 3: 1*



SUNDAY 13

One of the main reasons given for the UK voting to leave the EU was due to concerns over immigration. Freedom of movement for EU citizens has enabled large numbers of often skilled individuals and their families to settle in the UK. This has put pressure on public services and created an extra demand for housing.

CARING Saviour, we pray that EU citizens who currently live in the UK will not be made to feel unwelcome after the UK leaves the European Union. Please help them make wise decisions about where they want to live and work in the future. Amen.



MONDAY 14

Countries such as Spain and Italy are often the first port of call for migrants from North Africa and Syria. One of the consequences of this inward migration has been the election of 'nationalist' parties in several European countries. These parties all have a distinct bias against people considered to be 'foreigners.'

LOVING Father, may the image of the Holy Family fleeing oppression by escaping to Egypt motivate us to help and support those who face daily insecurity; who are weary and without a safe place to rest their heads. For all families in migration we pray. Amen.



TUESDAY 15

Denmark and the Republic of Ireland joined the EEC in January 1973, at the same time as the UK. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. Several other countries have joined since then, especially after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Croatia was the latest country to join in 2013.

GOOD Shepherd, we pray for all citizens of the EU. We ask that long-term solutions can be found to alleviate the problem of high unemployment among young people, so that they will have a hope for the future. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 16

Few countries have experienced economic crises more than Greece. It had to impose capital controls in 2015, as millions of people protested in the streets. Twice, it nearly crashed out of the euro. The economy shrank significantly, unemployment rose significantly and many people were driven into poverty. The country has had to rely on three bailouts since 2010, totalling €320bn overall.

MERCIFUL Lord, we bring before you all the citizens of Greece who have suffered so much since 2015. We ask that the Greek government can restore growth to the country and revive its credibility with the financial markets. Amen.



THURSDAY 17

The total EU budget for 2015 was €145bn. The UK's estimated net contribution was €8.5bn, according to Treasury figures. This equates to 12.57% of the total budget. Each country receives money back from the EU to support development and other projects. The UK also gets a rebate on its contribution. This is because much of the budget is spent on agricultural subsidies and the UK does not gain nearly as much as other countries like France.

GRACIOUS God, we pray for the EU budget to be spent wisely. We ask that such a large sum of money is not wasted but is used in such a way that all EU countries will benefit from the opportunities it brings. Amen.



FRIDAY 18

Except for Denmark and the United Kingdom who have opted out, all current and future members of the EU are obliged to replace their existing currencies and adopt the Euro as their currency. The UK had called for the EU treaties to recognise the EU as a "multicurrency union." This caused concerns about the process of euro adoption being undermined in the remaining nine countries that still have their own currencies.

FATHER of all, we pray for a positive relationship between euro and non-euro countries. We ask that, after the UK leaves the EU in March, there will be constructive talks about the balance of power between countries either in or out of the euro. Amen.



SATURDAY 19

Great Britain and Northern Ireland have a total of 73 MEPs. Elections take place every five years and the next elections are in May 2019. The UK is divided into 12 electoral regions with each region having between 3 and 10 MEPs. Each MEP in a region represents each person living there. In the European Parliament, MEPs are not organised by nationality but by political affiliation. They all sit in political groups.

RIGHTEOUS Judge, we pray for MEPs of all political persuasions. We ask that you give them wisdom in passing laws that affect many aspects of people's lives. We lift them to you as we remember the long hours they often work and the time spent away from families and friends. Amen.

DEMENTIA

'Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come... when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint...' *Ecclesiastes 12: 1 & 4*



SUNDAY 20

Loving Father, we pray for men and women suffering from dementia and their loved ones. In the midst of frailty and confusion, may your love touch their innermost being and impart hope that, at the right time, you will bring them to be in your house forever. Amen.



MONDAY 21

Lord, please grant courage to those diagnosed with early onset dementia. May they experience your help and strength as they come to terms with this, tell their family and friends, cope with potential limitations in their lives and face an uncertain future. Amen.



TUESDAY 22

Compassionate Saviour, we thank you for medications which are available to treat the symptoms of dementia. We realise that most are used to treat Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia. We pray that new drugs will be discovered which can treat a wider range of dementia sufferers and, one day, to reverse the symptoms of dementia. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 23

Pour your grace, O loving God, upon all suffering with dementia. You know how people can become fearful when they start to lose their memories. Bless them with patience, a loving and supporting family and days of hope and accomplishment. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.



THURSDAY 24

Prince of Peace, we pray for the families of former professional footballers who have contracted dementia and died at a relatively young age. We ask that, if a link between heading footballs and dementia is proved, the football authorities will act decisively to minimise the risk of this happening to present and future generations. Amen.



FRIDAY 25

Loving Saviour, please give doctors and scientists a better understanding of the different types of dementia and how individuals can reduce their risk of developing this disease. Help people to understand that having and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk of contracting dementia. Amen.



SATURDAY 26

O Lord we pray for all those whose work is dedicated to the assessment and care of those who experience confusion and profound memory loss. We remember all those working as Healthcare Professionals in everyday care and research into the causes of many different kinds of dementia. May they be strengthened in their work of service with individuals, families and friends. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

There are 850,000 people in the UK with dementia. This figure is set to rise to over one million by 2025 and two million by 2051. An estimated 225,000 individuals will develop dementia this year, that's 616 people every day. One in six people over the age of eighty suffer from dementia and 70% of those in care homes have dementia or severe memory problems.

Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions affecting the brain. These are often called "progressive neurological disorders." There are many different types of dementia and some people may have a combination of types. Regardless of which type is diagnosed, each person will experience their dementia in their own unique way.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. This is a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem solving or language.

January 27th - February 2nd

THIS WEEK'S THEME

TRANSGENDER

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is; his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

Romans 12: 2



SUNDAY 27

Merciful Lord, we ask for boldness to speak your truth to a society that supports relativism. Help us to hold firmly to what the Bible says, even when faced with ridicule or opposition. Give us grace and understanding as we speak and encourage others into your truth. Amen.



MONDAY 28

Heavenly Father, we recognise that all of creation has been affected by sin and the issues surrounding gender and sexuality are not straightforward. Help us to seek to understand those struggling with gender issues and to offer them love and hope through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.



TUESDAY 29

Holy Spirit, work in each one of us so that we are respectful of all we meet, whether we agree with them or not. May we act towards others in a way that honours them and may we use our bodies in a way which honours you. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 30

Dear God, help us to remember that you created human beings in your own image; "male and female he created them." Help us to stand firm and not be swayed by those who believe that non-gender documentation and gender-neutral titles should become the norm. Amen.



THURSDAY 31

Caring Lord, we ask for those in authority to show wisdom and understanding as to why women often feel uncomfortable about having trans women in their spaces. We pray for solutions to be found that honour others' opinions and respect the wishes of those born biologically female. Amen.



FRIDAY 1

Loving Saviour, we pray that politicians, bishops and others will be unafraid to challenge the political correctness which states that gender is not a male/female construct. Give them strength and courage to uphold this Biblical truth which many people simply regard as common sense. Amen.



SATURDAY 2

God of all comfort, we bring before you the 41% of transgender individuals who have experienced a hate crime. Let them feel safe in any public places they visit. Please give them wisdom in understanding how to behave when they are treated in this way. Help them to know 'a time to be silent and a time to speak.' Amen.

The Gender Identity Research & Education Society (GIREs) estimates that about 1% of the British population are gender-nonconforming to some degree. The number of men and women is about the same. Meanwhile, LGBT charity Stonewall found that 41% of transgender people have experienced a hate crime because of their gender identity in the past 12 months.

The Equality Act 2010 is intended to protect trans people from discrimination. It also says that anyone who identifies as a woman can use single-sex facilities. However, it does allow service providers, including hospitals and prisons, to refuse a trans person access to single-sex services if that is seen as detrimental to others.

Some people have encouraged others to talk about why women might feel cautious about having trans women in places where they will feel vulnerable. The issue probably needs careful consideration, due to the differences between trans women and people who were born biologically female.

The Government have said they have no intention of amending the Equality Act 2010, which allows for single-sex spaces.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

EVANGELISM

Research shows that although many Christians would like to invite people to church, most of them never do, many admitting they are too scared to talk about their faith with non-Christians.

40% of non-Christians who know a Christian say they have never had a conversation about Jesus with that person. Part of the fear may stem from a perception that society is increasingly hostile to public evangelism. Over recent years, numerous street pastors have been arrested and Christians have been disciplined or lost their jobs because they shared their beliefs in the workplace. However, in November 2016, in response to a question during Prime Minister's Questions, Theresa May said: "I'm sure we would all want to ensure that people at work do feel they are able to speak about their faith."

A number of resources are now being made available to help Christians to share their faith, including the Evangelical Alliance's website www.greatcommision.co.uk

February 3rd - February 9th

'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'

Matthew 28: 19-20



SUNDAY 3

Followers of Jesus are called to have a heart for those on the margins of society, such as the homeless, those with mental health issues, or those dependent on drugs or alcohol. It can be daunting to share our faith with marginalised people, but Jesus said that whatever we do for the least in society we do for him (Matthew 25: 31-46).

LOVING Lord, help us to bring the good news of the gospel to the poorest in our society. Give us courage to show your love in practical ways to those in need. Help us to demonstrate that Christianity is not just another religion, but a transformative relationship with the living God. Amen.



MONDAY 4

Many Christians are uncertain how to share their faith with those from other cultures, especially Muslims who believe the doctrine of the Trinity is blasphemous. However, Muslims do believe that Jesus was a prophet and they often long to be assured of God's love, forgiveness and salvation.

FATHER of all, help us to approach people of other religions with respect, humility, compassion and gentleness. Give us wisdom to know how to answer their questions and grace to be a good friend, allowing your love to flow through us and touch their hearts. Amen.



TUESDAY 5

The Prime Minister, Theresa May, has said she supports people having the freedom to share their faith openly in our nation. However, our equality laws are increasingly being applied to restrict this freedom, especially when Christians share more traditional, conservative beliefs which conflict with the progressive liberal voice.

RIGHTEOUS Judge, thank you for the hard work of all Christian MPs throughout the House of Commons. Give them courage and confidence in their work and enable the Prime Minister to uphold religious freedoms in this nation. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 6

For over 180 years, London City Mission has undertaken gospel ministry in the capital amongst the least reached, the poor and the marginalised. They run Saturday training days to help equip church leaders and church members who want to reach out with the gospel to their local community. Each of these training days in practical evangelism are stand-alone events, focused on a specific aspect of mission.

DEAR Lord, we thank you for the London City Mission and their faithfulness in gospel ministry for more than 180 years. We ask that their evangelism training is a positive experience for all who attend and will give them confidence to speak about their faith. Amen.

THURSDAY 7



Dr Billy Graham was probably the best-known evangelist of the 20th century and helped to bring many people to Christ. His first evangelistic rallies in London (or crusades, as they were known) were at Harringay stadium in 1954. It was at a Billy Graham rally in 1966 at Earl's Court that Sir Cliff Richard first made a public declaration of his Christian faith. Billy Graham's final UK mission was to Scotland in 1991.

LIGHT of the World, we give you thanks for the ministry and witness of Billy Graham over many years. We praise you that he was able to preach on the Good News of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to many thousands of people throughout the world. Amen.

FRIDAY 8



For just over 150 years, Scripture Union has been sharing the good news of Jesus with children and young people. It started when Joseph Spiers saw an opportunity to speak about Jesus to 15 children in a drawing room in Islington, London. These meetings grew rapidly and soon the Children's Special Service Mission was formed, which later became Scripture Union. Spiers also pioneered the notion of 'beach mission' while on holiday in Llandudno, North Wales in 1868.

THANK you Lord, for Scripture Union and for their faithfulness in sharing the gospel with children and young people for over 150 years. Give them wisdom to know how best to continue sharing this Good News in the years ahead. Amen.

SATURDAY 9



Christians often lack the confidence to share their faith in public. They believe their opinions may well be belittled and "go against the grain" of popular culture. Conversely, students who leave home to go to university are often open to the claims of Christianity. University Christian Unions are always very keen to welcome new students and take the opportunity to make Jesus known.

GRACIOUS and loving Saviour, we thank you for university Christian Unions and all the time they give in witnessing for you. Bless them in their endeavours we pray and may their efforts be rewarded with new believers coming into your kingdom. Amen.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

'Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbours; I am a dread to my friends... those who see me in the street flee from me.' *Psalms 31: 9-11*



SUNDAY 10

Merciful God, we pray for those who, by wanting to escape poverty and improve their lives, have fallen victim to trafficking. Please help them to be liberated from their captivity and find freedom. Enable them to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.



MONDAY 11

Caring Lord, we lift before you those who have applied for work in another country, but have arrived only to find out that the work does not exist and their passports and other documents are taken from them. Enable them to find safe spaces, where they can rebuild their confidence and plan for the future with optimism. Amen.



TUESDAY 12

Loving Saviour, we give thanks for the EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. We remember too how it gives victims certain legal rights to receive support. We pray that these rights will continue to apply after Brexit. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 13

God of justice, make us more aware of the victims of exploitation in this country. Help us to keep our eyes open for any signs that those we encounter in the most ordinary spaces could be involved in modern slavery. Show us what to do in these situations, we pray. Amen.



THURSDAY 14

Kind and generous Lord, we bring before you progress of The Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill. We thank you for this bill which aims to give victims of modern slavery in England and Wales the same right to support which those in Scotland and Northern Ireland already enjoy. We pray that the government in Westminster will support this bill so that it can become law. Amen.



FRIDAY 15

Good Shepherd, show us what to do if we suspect or witness human trafficking. Give us wisdom to know the appropriate organisation to contact so that action can be taken against the perpetrators. We remember in your word how you "proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Amen.



SATURDAY 16

Heavenly Father, whose children suffered at the hands of Herod, though they had done no wrong; give us grace neither to act cruelly nor to stand indifferently by, but to defend the weak from the tyranny of the strong; in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered for us, but is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Human trafficking and modern slavery are thought to be amongst the most widespread crimes in the world; affecting millions of men, women and children each day. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime defines it as:

'The act of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.'

Therefore, it consists of three elements: Movement or recruitment by deception or coercion for the purpose of exploitation.

In other words, human trafficking is a process of enslaving people, forcing them into a situation with no way out, compelling them to work against their will and exploiting them. Although trafficking for sexual exploitation gets much attention, the majority of people are trafficked into labour exploitation.

February 17th - February 23rd

THIS WEEK'S THEME

'For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.'

1 Timothy 2: 5

INTER-FAITH RELATIONS



SUNDAY 17

Lord, we know your Word teaches how Jesus says how "no-one comes to the Father except through me." Help us to be sensitive and yet clear in explaining the uniqueness of Christ to those whom we meet. Enable us to maintain the principles of respect and tolerance while finding positive ways to deal with disagreement. Amen.



MONDAY 18

Dear Father, help us to build good relationships and working partnerships with people of different faiths. Empower us to show the love of Jesus with all those we meet in a way that is attractive and encourages people to find out more about Christianity. Amen.



TUESDAY 19

Almighty God, who called your Church to witness that you were in Christ reconciling men to yourself: help us so to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be reconciled to you; through him who died for us and rose again and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 20

Caring Saviour, we bring before you all those who are suffering or have suffered from anti-Semitic or Islamophobic behaviour in the United Kingdom. Please protect them from harm and bring to justice those who commit these crimes, whether face to face or on social media. Amen.



THURSDAY 21

Righteous Judge, we pray for political parties in the United Kingdom who are perceived to have been slow in responding to allegations of anti-Semitism or Islamophobia or are seen to be condoning it. Please help them realise that actions speak louder than words. May faith communities be reassured that episodes of extremism and hate incidents are being tackled. Amen.



FRIDAY 22

Good Shepherd, we thank you for organisations such as The Inter Faith Network who aim to celebrate diversity and better understanding between different faith groups. Enable them, we pray, to build good relationships and working partnerships between people of different faiths and beliefs across the UK. Amen.



SATURDAY 23

Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life for all mankind: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth and to share his risen life; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The adjective 'interfaith' has been described as something 'relating to or involving different religions or members of different religions.' The Inter Faith Network for the UK works to promote understanding, cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK.

'Interfaith Week' takes place each November and usually starts on Remembrance Sunday. It is an opportunity to celebrate diversity and commonality and to highlight the good work done by local faith and faith-based groups and organisations.

Since the summer of 2018, concerns have been expressed about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party and the perceived slow or limited response in handling these allegations. Some have also said the Conservative Party has a problem with Islamophobia. This concern is based on newspaper articles and comments made in public by certain politicians. These allegations come amid concerns within wider society about extremism and hate incidents which have affected a number of faith communities.



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.

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