



PRAYER GUIDE

FOR
Parliament
AND THE
Nation

March
April
May
2020



The
Nationwide
Christian Trust

ROYAL FAMILY

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex announced on 8th January they planned to “step back” from their roles as full-time members of the Royal Family. They also expressed a desire for a “progressive new role” within the institution; spending time in both Canada and the UK. This role would enable them to be financially independent.

The Queen was broadly supportive of the Duke and Duchess’ decision to divide their time between Canada and the UK. Nonetheless, she was said to be “hurt and disappointed” the way the news was communicated. When asked in a YouGov poll a few days after the news was made known, if the Duke and Duchess were right not to tell the Queen their plans in advance, 71% of respondents said No.

There now follows a period of transition where things such as living arrangements, titles, funding and the issue of security need to be worked out. In addition, a decision will have to be made on whether or not the couple would lose the use of Frogmore Cottage, their home on the Windsor estate. This historic Grade II listed house was refurbished during the early part of 2019, at a cost of £2.4million.

The Duchess has previously indicated she found it hard to settle in the UK since her marriage to Prince Harry in May 2018.

CONTINUE TO PRAY for the Royal Family. Pray also for the Duke and Duchess during this time of change.

EASTER

The date of Easter changes every year. It is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox. This means it can fall as early as 22nd March or as late as 25th April. The last time Easter was celebrated early was in 2008; when it was on 23rd March. This year Easter is celebrated on 12th April, which is fairly typical compared with other years.

Easter Sunday is one of only two days in the entire calendar year when all large supermarkets and department stores have to remain closed. The other is on Christmas Day. It is considered one of the most important days in the Christian calendar. There are two public holidays either side of Easter Sunday. One is two days before on Good Friday; the other is the day after on Easter Monday.

CONTINUE TO PRAY that during Holy Week and Easter, cathedral and church services across the country will be well attended. Pray that many non-Christians will stop to ponder the real meaning of Easter. May they realise it is so much more than Easter eggs and a long weekend away from work.

On 23rd June 2016, 51.9% of those who voted in the EU referendum voted Leave. However, when the results were broken down on a country-by-country basis, the following figures emerged. In England, 53.4% voted Leave. In Scotland, it was 38.0%. In Wales, 52.5% with 44.2% voting Leave in Northern Ireland.

For three and a half years after the result was announced, political parties at Westminster argued about what type of Brexit it should be. Whether hard or soft, 'Canada plus plus' or a World Trade Organisation deal, the debates seemed never ending. There were also demands from some quarters for a "people's vote" or "confirmatory vote" on the final deal to help end the logjam.

Much of this wrangling started after the general election in 2017, which resulted in the then Prime Minister Theresa May's government losing their overall majority. This forced her to enter into a 'confidence and supply' arrangement with the Democratic Unionist Party.

From the start of the Brexit negotiations, Mrs May insisted that she wanted a "bespoke" deal tailored specifically for the UK. But not an off-the-shelf model designed around arrangements offered to other trading partners. She was quoted as saying more than once "no deal is better than a bad deal."

Her Withdrawal Agreement reached in November 2018 guaranteed the rights of UK citizens currently living in the other 27 EU countries and European nationals in Britain. It also settled the UK's outstanding liabilities to Brussels budgets for a payment of around £39 billion. In addition, it took Britain out of the EU single market and customs union, the common agriculture and fisheries policies and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. Alongside this was a Political Declaration agreed by the UK and EU27, setting out a common determination to forge a close future relationship in areas such as trade and security.

This "bespoke" deal was voted on by the House of Commons three times in early 2019. On each occasion, it was rejected by a large majority of MPs. The first time was by 230 votes, the biggest in Parliamentary

history. As a consequence of this and other defeats, including a poor showing in May's European elections, Mrs May resigned as Conservative leader on 7th June 2019. This paved the way for Boris Johnson to become Prime Minister on 24 July 2019.

His initial efforts to pass Brexit legislation in the House of Commons were unsuccessful. In particular, his attempt to suspend or "prorogue" Parliament fell foul of the Supreme Court. After negotiating a revised deal with the EU, Mr Johnson called a general election for 12th December 2019, pledging to "get Brexit done" and break the Parliamentary deadlock. He was returned with an 80 seat majority. The Liberal Democrats, who ran a strong anti-Brexit campaign promising to revoke Article 50, won only 11 seats.

Since December, the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill has made its way through Parliament. It has now received Royal Assent and become law.

WELCOME TO OUR PRAYER GUIDE

The European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill made its way through the various Parliamentary stages in January (see opposite page). This Parliamentary Bill ensured the UK left the European Union on 31st January this year. The UK and EU are now in the process of negotiating a trade deal. Boris Johnson's ambition is for it to be finalised by 31st

December 2020. Some MPs and others have suggested the Prime Minister conduct parallel trade talks with the USA, Australia and other countries. This would allow the government to maximise its opportunities of trade 'post-Brexit.' A letter signed by 60 MPs had called on the government to allow Big Ben to chime symbolically at 11pm on 31st January to mark the UK's departure from the EU. However, the cost of £500,000 was considered to be prohibitive.

The general election on 12th December 2019 produced a landslide majority of 80 for the Conservative Party. This has allowed Prime Minister Boris Johnson to push ahead with his plans, not just for leaving the EU, but to put forward his domestic agenda as well. One of the surprising events that happened in the election was the Conservative Party breaking through the so-called "red wall" of Labour constituencies in the Midlands and North of England. With that in mind, the Prime Minister plans to spend large sums of money in areas of the country that feel left behind.

Meanwhile, in the wake of their general election defeat, the Labour Party is now in the process of electing a new leader. At the time of writing, four candidates have put their names forward and been nominated for the position. They are: Sir Keir Starmer, Rebecca Long-Bailey, Emily Thornberry and Lisa Nandy. The role of deputy leader is also up for election. Five candidates have been nominated for this role. They are: Rosena Allin Khan,

Richard Burgon, Dawn Butler, Ian Murray and Angela Rayner. The results of both elections will be announced on 4th April.

Once elected, the new leader and deputy leader will need to decide the party's position 'post-Brexit' on a whole range of issues. These include the UK's future relationship with the EU, immigration and putting forward proposals to deal with and mitigate the effects of climate change.

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 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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March 1st - March 7th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

'Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."'

Genesis 1: 29



SUNDAY 1

Gracious God, we praise you for the gift of food and the wide variety we are able to eat in this country. May we always be grateful for your provision. Help us to be sensible in the amount of food we eat and not to overindulge, we pray. Amen.



MONDAY 2

Generous Lord, we thank you for the 'Meat Free Monday' initiative which helps raise awareness of the health benefits of having at least one meat free day each week. We pray that people will be motivated to reduce their red meat consumption, as they become more aware of the increased risk of deaths from heart disease, stroke and cancer. In Jesus' name. Amen.



TUESDAY 3

Father of Creation, we pray in particular for vegans whose diets may be lacking in protein, plus trace elements such as iron and calcium. Please help them to be aware of this. May they take steps to increase their intake of protein, vitamin B12 and these important trace elements. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 4

Bread of Life, we bring before you livestock farmers who feel threatened and intimidated by small numbers of vegan activists, who the media have described as "militant vegans." May they be protected from harm and encouraged to raise their animals as humanely as possible, we pray. Amen.



THURSDAY 5

Merciful Saviour, we pray for a greater understanding and acceptance between those who eat meat and those who choose not to. May there be a significant reduction in the sometimes confrontational speech that these groups often demonstrate. In your name. Amen.



FRIDAY 6

Faithful One, we give thanks for the wide variety of vegetarian and vegan food recipes that are now available. We thank you that this has resulted in vegetarians and vegans becoming much more aware of the quality of food they eat. Amen.



SATURDAY 7

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and give us the fruits of the earth in their season. Grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need and for our own wellbeing; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

VEGETARIAN/ VEGANISM

Vegetarianism has become increasingly popular in recent years. Concerns for the environment and animal welfare have helped fuel this change. There is also a belief that vegetarian food is healthier. Vegetarians don't eat meat, fish or seafood. They do, however, eat eggs, dairy and honey. Vegans, on the other hand, don't eat eggs, dairy or honey. They only consume foods such as vegetables and fruits, grains and pulses, nuts and seeds. This can leave them at risk of becoming deficient in important trace elements such as iron and calcium and vitamin B12. Experts from the universities of Oxford, Leeds and King's College said as many as 20% of vegans may be dangerously short of vitamin B12, which is crucial for healthy nerves, cells and DNA.

Vegetarian and vegan food recipes have become much more varied in recent years. This has resulted in both vegetarians and vegans being very aware of the quality of their food. Therefore, they are more inclined to prepare their own meals and more likely to avoid processed foods.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

DEMENTIA IN SPORT

Following a report in Autumn 2019 linking football to dementia, Scotland seems likely to become the first country in Europe to ban children from heading a football during games. Scottish football's governing body is considering the move after experts from the University of Glasgow found former professional players were 3.5 times more likely to die from dementia than people of the same age in the general population. Since 2014, children under 12 in the USA have been banned from heading a ball.

The charity Alzheimer's UK believe that possible links between contact sports and dementia must be balanced against the benefits of physical exercise on the brain. Many experts are concerned that headlines linking playing football to dementia may have a negative effect on participation in all sport. There is a strong body of evidence to show how regular physical activity and exercise can reduce the risk of dementia. Footballers also tend to be much fitter and healthier than the general population, with better cardiovascular health.

March 8th - March 14th

'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

Romans 5: 8



SUNDAY 8

In October 2019, two former footballers revealed they were suffering from dementia. The family of former Liverpool footballer Peter Cormack said they believed his condition was linked to his playing days. George Reilly, who played for Watford in the 1984 FA Cup final, had received no help from the FA since being diagnosed with dementia.

GOD of all comfort, we pray for all former footballers who suffer from dementia and for their families. May they receive the support they need to help them cope with this distressing condition. Amen.



MONDAY 9

Research into the potential for physical exercise to reduce the risk of dementia is continuing. While definitive evidence from randomised trials is not yet available, several studies have found that physical activity in early, mid and late life is associated with a lower risk of dementia and cognitive decline.

BRIGHT Morning Star, we pray that there will be conclusive evidence proving that physical exercise reduces the risk of dementia. Please may more people of all ages be encouraged to take up physical activity. Amen.



TUESDAY 10

The England Rugby website makes it clear that, although the risk of concussion in rugby can't be eliminated, it can be reduced. Measures include: appropriate protection padding on all posts and barriers on or close to the pitch. Also, appropriate first aid / immediate care provision being available. Tackle technique is also important, as this can help prevent players hitting their heads on the ground.

LORD of Wisdom and Might, we thank you for the measures in place to reduce the risk of concussion in rugby. May they be successful in reducing the occurrence of those playing this particular sport. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 11

Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is a neurodegenerative disease caused by repeated head injuries. Symptoms may include behavioural problems and typically do not begin until years after the injuries. CTE often gets worse over time and can result in dementia. One common preventative method has been the use of helmets, which help to prevent direct head trauma.

GOOD Shepherd, we know that most documented cases of CTE have occurred in athletes involved in sports such as boxing and American football. We pray that improved recognition and treatment of concussions and other head trauma can help reduce the likelihood of CTE development. Amen.



THURSDAY 12

The NHS website states that: “There's currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease. But there is medication available that can temporarily reduce the symptoms.” The main medicines are called acetylcholinesterase inhibitors. In addition, cognitive therapy can help patients suffering from mild to moderate Alzheimer's with things like memory and problem-solving skills.

CARING God, we pray that new medicines will soon become available to treat this disease. Meanwhile, please give grace and patience to those suffering from this disease and for their families. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



FRIDAY 13

The National Football League (NFL) in America has offered to meet European football's governing bodies to share best practice in protecting players from the risk of brain damage. The NFL is trying to minimise the risk of head impacts in American football with a wide range of rule changes and improvements to its concussion protocols.

GENEROUS Lord, thank you for the 29% reduction in American football concussions in 2018. We pray that European football authorities will learn the positive things from this NFL research. May they apply them to prevent incidents of concussion for footballers in Europe. Amen.



SATURDAY 14

The Alzheimer's Society has created a dementia friendly sport and physical activity guide. It aims to inform and educate individuals and organisations so they have a better understanding of dementia and how it affects people. It provides tools and guidance to enable more people affected by dementia to lead active lives. It also signposts relevant organisations and explains where to find more information.

ALMIGHTY God, thank you for this dementia friendly sport and physical activity guide. Please may it be successful in providing helpful and up to date information that allows sufferers to better understand how dementia may affect them and their families. Amen.

DISABILITY

'But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Luke 14: 13-14



SUNDAY 15

Heavenly Father, use us to challenge attitudes and prejudices within our society that prevent disabled people from using their skills and talents in the workplace. Remove blocks to employment for disabled people and bless all employers who provide opportunities for them within their own workforces. Amen.



MONDAY 16

God of mercy and grace, please help us to cherish and care for those who need special attention because of learning disabilities and other conditions. Help churches to welcome them and to provide an environment of respect, security and love. Amen.



TUESDAY 17

Lord Jesus, we read in the gospels how you healed many people with disabilities, including those who were blind, deaf or suffering from leprosy. We praise you for healing us in body, mind and spirit. Help us to support and help those suffering from various disabilities in our own age. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 18

Caring Saviour, we are concerned that those with disabilities have an employment rate which is 30.1% lower than for able-bodied people. Please equip the Work and Pensions Secretary and the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, with godly counsel and good judgement as they work to improve disability employment rates. May they be successful in closing this gap, so that more disabled people can find work. Amen.



THURSDAY 19

God of Love, please help us to use the resources you have given us to build a community where the weak are supported by the strong and the poor are not neglected. May your church extend your love to everyone. May it be a place where disabled people can be sure they are welcome. Amen.



FRIDAY 20

Light of the World, we give thanks for the number of churches that are now disabled friendly compared with previous years. Thank you also that Archbishop Justin Welby is exploring how disabled people can participate fully in the life of the Church. Please bless this initiative, we pray. Amen.



SATURDAY 21

Merciful Lord, it is good to be aware of public transport plans to improve access for disabled people. Whether it be step-free access to underground trains or buses, we give thanks for these different initiatives. We pray that more people become aware of the availability of disabled railcards and the opportunities they offer. Amen.

There are more than 7.6 million disabled people of working age in the UK. However, only 51.3% are in employment, compared with 81.4% of able-bodied people. The Government has set itself an ambitious target of 4.5 million people with disabilities being in employment by 2027.

The Disability Discrimination Act, which came into force in 1995, places a responsibility on employers and service providers to make "reasonable adjustments" to enable buildings to be more disabled friendly. This may include the provision of entrance ramps and disabled toilets. For the purposes of the Act, a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This Act has now been repealed and replaced by the Equality Act 2010, except in Northern Ireland where it still applies.

March 22nd - March 28th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

SCHOOLS

"Love is patient; love is kind; it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." *1 Corinthians 13: 4+7*



SUNDAY 22

Faithful One, we bring before you the more than 175 million children around the world who are not enrolled in pre-primary education. We know the reasons for this include the role of poverty and the impact of conflicts. May these children not be denied the opportunity to learn and develop the critical skills they need in school. In your name, we pray. Amen.



MONDAY 23

Light of the World, we pray for school governors and thank you for all the work they do. May your Spirit guide them in wanting the best for teachers and their pupils. Give them wisdom as they monitor and evaluate the progress of their schools. Show them when to challenge the headteacher and when to act as a source of support. Amen.



TUESDAY 24

Lord of all understanding and knowledge, please grant wisdom to all who teach, mentor and facilitate students throughout our education system. May those seeking to learn be conscientious and focused, even when their circumstances are difficult. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 25

Generous God, we thank you that childhood is a time of boundless curiosity and enthusiasm. May children always have open hearts and minds to learn new things and not be prevented from learning about you, we pray. Amen.



THURSDAY 26

Father, we pray concerning this new guidance intended to teach pupils about same sex relationships and gender issues. We know the level of detail it provides has caused concern among some parents and teaching professionals. Please give wisdom to schools as they produce their curriculum. Help parents discern how best to explain these issues with their children. Amen.



FRIDAY 27

Gracious Lord, we long for every UK school to be covered by intercessory prayer. We pray that you might act in specific situations; bless staff, children and their families. Please enable all who are involved in education to see good fruit for all their work. In Jesus' name. Amen.



SATURDAY 28

Good Shepherd, please watch over the rising numbers of young people who are excluded from school, one in five of them aged under twelve. Grant great patience and understanding to those who care for them. Please help them to identify underlying problems and provide comfort and hope. Amen.

New requirements on Relationships and Sex Education will become mandatory in all primary and secondary schools from September 2020. Parents and carers will be able to withdraw their children from the sex education but not the relationships education part of the new guidance.

The law requiring a daily assembly of collective worship in schools has been under attack recently by Humanists UK. In Autumn 2019, they successfully campaigned for Burford primary school in Oxfordshire to have a separate, secular assembly for those parents who want it. Many Christians believe this decision to be short-sighted as it deprives children of celebrating a shared heritage and understanding.

A school governor is a challenging but hugely rewarding role, which gives individuals the chance to make a real difference to young people. It also enables them to give something back to their local community. Both primary and secondary schools need governing boards that have a balance and diversity of knowledge, skills and experience to enable them to be effective.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

THE ALPHA COURSE

Alpha is an evangelistic course that seeks to introduce the basics of the Christian faith, through a series of talks and discussions. It is based on hospitality, sharing and open conversation. Its organisers describe it as "an opportunity to explore the meaning of life." The same Alpha content is run all over the world, by Christians of all traditions, who share the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

It started as a course for church members regarding the basics of beliefs commonly held by many believers in Christ but then began to be used as an introduction for those interested in the faith. Millions of people have experienced Alpha in over 100 countries and over 100 languages around the globe. It has been proven to be most effective in parishes that run it as part of an ongoing process of evangelisation, not just as a one-off.

The 10-week format of the course, which includes a weekend away, was introduced in 1981 and continues to this day.

March 29th - April 4th

'With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all.'

Acts 4: 33



SUNDAY 29

Alpha was started by Charles Marnham at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) church in south-west London in 1977. Nicky Gumbel started leading it in 1990, when it was adapted as a course for those outside the church.

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.



MONDAY 30

After Nicky Gumbel took over in 1990, the number of people attending Alpha at HTB grew quickly into the hundreds. This attracted the attention of other churches across different denominations seeking to find an effective tool for evangelism.

HEAVENLY Father, we give thanks and praise you for the Alpha Course and how it has grown since Nicky Gumbel took over. May it continue to be used to bless others and be a valuable tool for presenting and explaining the gospel. Amen.



TUESDAY 31

Each Alpha session begins with a meal, followed by a talk and a discussion in small groups. The talks are intended to cover the basic beliefs of the Christian faith.

LORD Jesus, we remember how you were recorded many times in the gospels having meals with your disciples and others, particularly at the Last Supper. Help us to be hospitable to friends and family when we have the opportunity, we pray. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 1

The Alpha Course is intended to emphasize the essentials that all denominations agree on. By focussing on the essentials of the Christian faith, it enables Alpha to be used in almost any context. This means that everyone has the opportunity to see their friends' lives transformed by the gospel.

ALMIGHTY God, who gave to your apostles grace to believe and preach your Word: grant that your Church may love that Word which they believed and may faithfully preach and receive the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



THURSDAY 2

Supporters of Alpha include many Catholic cardinals, Anglican archbishops, bishops and leading figures from all denominations. Former Archbishops of Canterbury Rowan Williams and George Carey are enthusiastic supporters. They have described it as “a very special tool” and “superb.”

LOVING Saviour, thank you for the prominent support of Alpha from so many Christian leaders. May their words of encouragement inspire those who are considering attending an Alpha course later this year. Amen.



FRIDAY 3

Over the years, some people have criticised Alpha for its perceived charismatic emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Some conservative evangelicals also believe it does not adequately define the nature of sin and the reason for Jesus' death and resurrection. The alternative 'Christianity Explored' course was intended to answer these criticisms.

FATHER, we realise some Christians have genuine concerns about aspects of the Alpha course. May these concerns not act as a brake, preventing a unity in the church that you Son prayed for on the eve of His passion. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



SATURDAY 4

The Alpha website www.alpha.org includes much useful information for anyone interested in finding out more about Alpha and what it involves. It also provides an opportunity for individuals to locate any churches near them that run Alpha courses during the year.

LIGHT of the World, we thank you for those who maintain and update information on the Alpha website. We pray that it will continue being a helpful resource for those who need it. In your name. Amen.

April 5th - April 11th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIAN CONVERTS FROM ISLAM

'On [God] we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many.' *2 Corinthians 1: 10b-11*



SUNDAY 5

Jesus, Light of the World, thank you for opening the hearts of so many Muslims to your truth through visions, dreams, Christian media and the work of Christian organisations in refugee camps throughout the Middle East. Bless and continue what you are doing, we pray. Amen.



MONDAY 6

Father of the Nations, thank you for the special church services conducted throughout the UK for asylum seekers, many of whom have converted to Christianity from Islam. May those who do not yet know you, experience your love and hear the Gospel message of peace, salvation and freedom. Amen.



TUESDAY 7

Lord of Love, please encourage Christian converts from Islam to stand firm in their new faith in you. Strengthen them and give them boldness in sharing their faith with others. May they be assured of your love and our prayers. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 8

Almighty God, please awaken governments across the world to the violence and persecution being experienced by Christians, especially those in the Middle East. Give wisdom and insight to Priti Patel MP, the Home Secretary, and help her to protect all UK citizens from religiously motivated attacks. In your name, Amen.



THURSDAY 9

Merciful Lord, please bless the work of organizations such as Open Doors, Barnabbas Fund and Christian Solidarity Worldwide who seek to support Christians living in Islamic nations. Grant them particular success we pray, in their efforts to provide Bibles to Christians living in these countries. Amen.



FRIDAY 10

Heavenly Father, give courage to all Christians living in Islamic countries. We remember particularly how Syria's Christian population has plunged from 1.7 million in 2011 to 450,000 in 2018. May they be surrounded by other Christians who can support and encourage them to prevent them remaining isolated in their faith. Amen.



SATURDAY 11

Good Shepherd, we thank you for the many millions of converts from Islam to Christianity in the past 20 years. Help us to befriend those we meet and show them Christ's love. Use our conversations to inspire a desire within them to know more of you, we pray. Amen.

Recent years have seen a global rise in Muslim fundamentalism alongside a dramatic increase in the numbers of Muslims converting to Christianity. Somewhere between 2 and 7 million former Muslims have converted to Christianity in the past two decades. This is despite the fact that conversion from Islam to another religion is met with severe consequences in many Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Punishments include social and familial exclusion, imprisonment and even death.

In addition, the persecution of Christians throughout the world is getting worse. This is increasingly being seen in Europe where around 50% of all Christian asylum seekers are converts from Islam. In November 2015, two men viciously attacked Nissar Hussain in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Mr Hussain was a former Muslim who had converted to Christianity more than 20 years previously. He and his family were forced to flee from their home under armed guard, after suffering seven years of religiously motivated persecution.

April 12th - April 18th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

ACTIVE FAITH

'Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes or daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

James 2: 15-17



SUNDAY 12

God of all mercy and grace, please forgive us for the times when our actions and words do not reflect genuine faith. Send us out in the power of Your Spirit, we pray. Help us to share the wonderful news of the gospel and may we live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.



MONDAY 13

Loving Lord, we lift to you those who live in extreme poverty; deprived of basic human needs like food, safe drinking water, sanitation and shelter. Thank you for the multitude of Christian initiatives around the world that are transforming lives and bringing hope. Amen.



TUESDAY 14

Father God, please grant fresh strength, courage and faith to Christian missionaries across the world who provide medical care, education, help to grow businesses and many other services to improve people's lives. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 15

Bread of Heaven, we thank you for the work of the Salvation Army, which is 155 years old this year. Thank you for all the spiritual and practical support they give to homeless people. Please continue to bless them as they minister to those in need. Help us to remember that they are also a church, which is active in more than 130 countries around the world. Amen.



THURSDAY 16

Caring Lord Jesus, we praise you for the vision of Paddy and Carol Henderson in founding the Trussell Trust. Thank you that the Trust has provided and continues providing food bank parcels and support to so many people across the UK. Amen.



FRIDAY 17

Almighty Father, whose Son Jesus Christ has taught us that what we do for the least of our brethren we do also for him; give us the will to be the servant of others as he was the servant of all, who gave us his life and died for us, but is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and for ever. Amen.



SATURDAY 18

Lord God Almighty, whose Son Jesus Christ has taught us that it is more blessed to give than to receive, help us by the example of your apostles to be generous with our time and unselfish in our service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), former German pastor and theologian once said: 'The church is the church only when it exists for others. The church must share in the ordinary problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.' Modern day examples may include working with homeless people or volunteering at a foodbank.

The Salvation Army began in East London in 1865 when Methodists, William and Catherine Booth, abandoned the traditional concept of a church pulpit to take God's Word directly to the people. The Booths preached and lived out a doctrine of practical Christianity; soup, soap and salvation, to encourage both social and spiritual transformation among society's most vulnerable and marginalised people. Their work included setting up shelters for homeless people, running soup kitchens and setting up rescue homes for women fleeing domestic abuse and prostitution.

The Trussell Trust was founded in 1997 by Paddy and Carol Henderson and supports over 1,200 food bank centres across the UK. They provide emergency food and support to those trapped in poverty.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

SCIENCE AND FAITH

The popular view is that science and faith conflict. This is something that children and adults are often taught. As most Christians are not scientists, churches are reluctant to use science to help children explore God in the world around them. However, Christians believe that science and faith can go hand in hand to help us understand the world we live in.

Michael Faraday was a famous British scientist who contributed to the study of electromagnetism and electrochemistry. He was also a committed Christian. He believed that, while investigating the natural world serves to indicate God's existence, salvation only comes from faith in the Lord, as shown in the pages of the Bible.

Over the last 25 years or so, atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens have been very strident and vocal in their attempts to debunk religious belief. Some believe this makes them intolerant towards people of faith and sometimes openly hostile.

April 19th - April 25th

'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.'

Psalms 19: 1-2



SUNDAY 19

Christians working in science don't believe there is any inconsistency between using scientific methods to explore the universe and having a personal relationship with Jesus. Belief in science does not exclude a belief in Jesus.

CREATOR God, we praise you for the wonder of your creation and for helping us to understand and appreciate its incredible complexity and diversity. May we always be certain that belief in science can compliment belief in your son Jesus. Amen.



MONDAY 20

The Christian charity Scripture Union has created a science-themed holiday club called Wonder Zone. This is intended to help children explore God's amazing creation, regardless of their faith background.

HOLY Spirit, we pray that many churches will be inspired and excited to use new resources showing children how science and faith compliment each other. Help them to realise that you are alive and at work in the world around them. Amen.



TUESDAY 21

Children and young people are always interested to discover new things about science and the natural world. Presenting this information in a way that they would find interesting and want to engage with, can be a challenge for teachers and others.

WONDERFUL Saviour, we pray that children will discover you in science and your amazing love revealed to us. May they be open to the idea of a 'Creator God' and of things being created, not evolving over time. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 22

Although still a minority view in Western culture, atheism has nevertheless grown in popularity. Many contemporary celebrities, actors and musicians would profess to be atheists, with most adopting a 'live and let live' attitude. But there are some whose approach is not passive non-belief, but aggressive atheism.

GRACIOUS Lord, we pray especially for atheists who believe science and religion are mutually incompatible. Please show us how best to engage with them in such a way that our views and opinions would be respected. Amen.



THURSDAY 23

Apart from Michael Faraday, other well-known scientists who were committed Christians includes: Sir Humphry Davy (who invented the safety lamp), Samuel Morse (who developed Morse code) and Florence Nightingale.

HEAVENLY Father, we give thanks for the many scientists, both men and women, who have testified to a faith in you. May they be an example to others today, who may wonder if scientific investigation can help to confirm the existence of a creator God. In your name, we pray. Amen.



FRIDAY 24

Sir David Attenborough is a world-famous English broadcaster and natural historian. His many television programmes include The Blue Planet, Life in the Freezer and Seven Worlds. Even though he has studied the natural world over many decades, Sir David has said publicly that he does not believe creationism should be taught in schools.

FORGIVING Lord, we pray for people like Sir David Attenborough and others. Although very intelligent, they refuse to acknowledge your hand at work in the natural world. Please open their eyes to your work of creation. Amen.



SATURDAY 25

Christians in Science (CiS) is an international network of those concerned with the relationship between science and Christian faith. It is open to scientists, teachers, students and all those with an interest in this topic. Although CiS is primarily a professional group, aimed at those working in science, a significant proportion of their members are not scientists.

GENEROUS God, thank you for CiS and their desire to communicate the relationship between science and Christian faith. We pray that anyone interested in science and faith will be encouraged to join. In Jesus' name, Amen.

April 26th - May 1st

THIS WEEK'S THEME

MALARIA

'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people.'

Matthew 4: 23



SUNDAY 26

Generous Lord, we give thanks for the Mosquirix vaccine, currently the only vaccine that has been demonstrated to significantly reduce malaria in children. We praise you that, in clinical trials, the vaccine was found to prevent approximately 4 in 10 malaria cases, including 3 in 10 cases of life-threatening severe malaria. Amen.



MONDAY 27

God of all Comfort, we thank you that malaria bed nets have proved so effective in preventing the spread of malaria. We pray that nets soaked with a combination of chemicals will help to control numbers of insecticide-resistant mosquitoes and reduce the spread of malaria. Amen.



TUESDAY 28

Gracious Saviour, we pray for scientists working in pharmaceutical companies to discover, develop and deliver the next generation of medicines to treat malaria. Please give them success in their research, so that millions of people around the world can benefit. In your name. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 29

Lord of the years, we thank you that, although malaria was once endemic in medieval Europe, this is no longer true. May the number of cases of malaria in other continents of the world decrease similarly as new medicines become available. Amen.



THURSDAY 30

Father of Mercy, we pray that this disease will stop spreading and ultimately for disease elimination. Nevertheless, we realise how all stages of the complex malaria lifecycle need targeting for this to happen. May scientists and doctors gain a better understanding of the malaria lifecycle, so that it can be appropriately treated. Amen.



FRIDAY 1

Merciful Saviour, we pray for the more than 200 million people who contract malaria every year. Thank you that the death rate is low in otherwise healthy adults. However, we bring before you the many thousands of children who die from this disease and their families. Amen.



SATURDAY 2

Light of the World, we bring before you those suffering from recurrent *P. vivax* infection. We know patients with this form of malaria can relapse many years after the initial infection. Please may new treatments be discovered and provided that don't have the severe side-effects of some existing medications, we pray. Amen.

Malaria remains one of the world's leading killers, claiming the life of one child every two minutes. Over 90% of these deaths are in Africa, where more than 250,000 children die from the disease every year. Children under 5 are at greatest risk of its life-threatening complications. Worldwide, malaria kills 435,000 people a year, most of them children. Statistics show that over 200 million cases of malaria occur each year.

The disease is caused by single-celled parasites in the genus *Plasmodium*, which are carried by *Anopheles* mosquitoes. When an infected female mosquito (the disease can only be passed on by females) bites a human, parasites rapidly pass into the host's liver cells. They then become dormant. During this phase the patient has no symptoms. However, when the liver cells rupture, any parasites they contain pass into the bloodstream and red blood cells, where they reproduce approximately 10-fold every two days. If left undiagnosed and not treated properly, malaria can be fatal. A single mosquito bite is all it takes for someone to become infected.

May 3rd - May 9th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

MODERN SLAVERY

'Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.'

Proverbs 14: 31



SUNDAY 3

Father God, we lift to you all those in the UK who are victims of slavery. Please bring them freedom. Raise awareness of the scale of the problem within our communities and prevent organisations from exploiting foreign workers for their own gain. Amen.



MONDAY 4

Loving Lord, we pray for those involved in combating slavery in the UK, especially those in the Border Agency and police. Give them wisdom and discernment in their work and guide them to those places where vulnerable workers are being exploited. Amen.



TUESDAY 5

Wise Saviour, we know many sectors within the UK are now at risk of modern slavery offences, including fishing, agriculture, domestic and care workers and car washes. Open our eyes to the signs of abuse that could indicate slavery. Help us to be aware of our own buying habits, so that we do not support slavery unwittingly. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 6

Heavenly Father, thank you for the work of Lord McColl of Dulwich in bringing the Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill before Parliament. We pray this Bill will be reintroduced soon in the new Parliamentary session. Please also encourage and embolden the Minister for Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, as she works to end modern slavery in the UK.



THURSDAY 7

Merciful Lord, we pray for all victims of slavery in the UK, that they will receive appropriate practical and financial support. Help them to understand the various types of state support available to them. Please give them the ongoing assistance they need to develop the skills and resilience to forge a new life. Amen.



FRIDAY 8

Righteous Judge, please set free the millions of people trafficked and enslaved into forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and other terrible situations. Please grant success to charities and other organisations who are campaigning on their behalf. Amen.



SATURDAY 9

Almighty God, bless the work of churches and Christian organisations across the country that are working with victims of slavery and trafficking. We especially lift to you the Salvation Army and pray that you would increase their influence. Please give them favour as they work with the public, private and charitable sectors to end modern slavery. Amen.

An estimated 10,000-13,000 people are victims of modern slavery in the UK. However, the National Crime Agency believes this figure is "the tip of the iceberg." Lord McColl's Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill was intended to improve the support available for victims. State support is provided to potential victims of modern slavery as they go through the National Referral Mechanism's (NRM) assessment process. Nevertheless, some support stops once a final decision has been made. This often results in vulnerable people falling into destitution, alcoholism and exploitation.

Lord McColl's Bill included a duty on Government to provide all those referred to the NRM with support and assistance during a "reflection and recovery period" of at least 45 days. The Bill also created a new duty on the Government to provide support to confirmed victims for 12 months once the NRM process is over. However, this Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the December 2019 general election. Therefore it will have to be reintroduced in the new Parliamentary session.

THIS WEEK'S THEME

FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

In 2014, the Children and Families Act placed a new duty on local authorities to consider a "fostering to adopt" placement for looked-after children for whom the local authority was considering adoption.

Research has shown that the early months and years of a child's life are key to laying the foundations for development and securing good outcomes for the child. An integral part of this is their need for stable and loving relationships. The parent/child relationship is disrupted when they are taken into care. The child's relationship with their foster carers is again disrupted when they are finally placed with adoptive parents. "Fostering to adopt" aims to minimise multiple moves within the care system and the detrimental effect this has on a child. It enables children (usually babies) to form early permanent bonds by placing them with approved adopters who will foster first. This provides the child with a stable home and consistent, uninterrupted care at a much earlier stage in their life.

May 10th - May 16th

'At that time Moses was born and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son.

Acts 7: 20-21



SUNDAY 10

In the UK, around 4,000 children are waiting for adoption. However, finding a permanent placement or going through the adoption planning process can be lengthy. Some children end up waiting two years or more to be placed with an adoptive family.

HEAVENLY Father, we pray for children across the UK not currently living with their parents. Please comfort and protect them in their present situation and grant them peace as they face an uncertain future. Give each child the hope of a new family to provide them with the nurture, love and encouragement they need. Amen.



MONDAY 11

For many children placed in local authority care, a foster placement is seen as the best option. It balances the needs of the child for a committed relationship with their carer, with the possibility that the relationship will end. This may be, for example, because the child is either returned to its birth parents or adopted.

COMPASSIONATE Lord, we lift to you the 73,000 children in care in the UK, praying that each one receives the love and affection they need. Thank you for foster parents across the UK. Please bless them as they seek to bless the children in their care. Amen.



TUESDAY 12

Capacity within the fostering sector is decreasing. With the number of children in care rising in each of the last nine years, there are concerns about the shortfall in available foster families. Research by the Fostering Network states that 8,600 additional fostering families were needed across the UK in 2018.

GOD of Grace, thank you for foster carers who make a huge commitment to the children in their care; making a vital contribution to their health, well-being and future outcomes. Please raise

awareness of the needs of the fostering care system. Bring about solutions to the problems of recruitment and retention of foster carers. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 13

Under the Staying Put initiative, which became law through the Children and Families Act 2014, councils have a duty to support looked-after children who wish to remain with their foster carer until they are 21. However, concerns have been raised that the scheme is being hindered by a lack of funding from central government to enable councils to cover the additional cost.

ALMIGHTY God, we lift to you Michelle Donelan, Minister for Children and Families. Please guide her as she considers the financial impact of the Staying Put initiative. Bless her with wisdom and understanding, we pray. Use her to improve the outcomes for children in care. Amen.



THURSDAY 14

Local authority foster carers foster the majority of looked-after children. However, local authorities are increasing the percentage of children they place through independent fostering agencies.

BLESSED Lord, thank you for the many independent fostering agencies across the UK. Please help them to provide their carers with the support they need to do their jobs well. May they make a positive difference to the lives of disadvantaged young people, we pray. Amen.



FRIDAY 15

Home for Good is an initiative launched by Care for the Family, the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service and Evangelical Alliance. It aims to make adoption and fostering a significant part of the culture of local churches across the UK.

JESUS Saviour, please bless the work of Home for Good and use them to inspire more churches across the UK. Although not all of us can adopt or foster, many are able to offer support to families in need. Please stir our hearts and enable us to be good news in our communities, helping to transform the lives of vulnerable children. In your name. Amen.



SATURDAY 16

The Christian charity, Safe Families for Children, partners with churches of all denominations to offer support to vulnerable children and families. They operate across England, Scotland and Wales, connecting struggling families with volunteers who provide support through befriending, mentoring, resources and temporary overnight hosting of children.

LOVING Lord, thank you for the vision of those who founded Safe Families for Children and the positive impact the charity is having on the emotional and mental health of families. Please raise up more volunteers to help parents and carers maintain the primary care of their children. Amen.

May 17th - May 23rd

THIS WEEK'S THEME

YEMEN

'You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth-pains.' *Matthew 24: 6-8*



SUNDAY 17

Eternal God, give wisdom to our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson and Ben Wallace Defence Secretary, as they pursue diplomatic relations with various countries in the Gulf and Middle East. May they act with integrity in all their dealings and use the UK Government for good in the region. Amen.



MONDAY 18

Prince of Peace, we thank you for the power-sharing agreement signed on November 5, 2019, between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the southern separatists backed by the United Arab Emirates. We pray that it can be part of a wider political solution to end the complex conflict in Yemen. Amen.



TUESDAY 19

God of all comfort, we bring before you the families of the more than 85,000 children who have died since this civil war started in 2015. Please comfort them in their distress, we pray. Please protect the children and families of those still living in Yemen, we pray. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 20

Caring Saviour, thank you for the work that Tearfund and Save the Children are doing across Yemen, by running clinics, hospitals and health and nutrition teams. Please bless their efforts in treating sick, injured and malnourished children and providing access to safe drinking water. In your name, we pray, Amen.



THURSDAY 21

Dear Lord, please bring freedom and peace to the war-torn country of Yemen. Fill the Yemeni people with a new hope for the future and cause the leaders of the warring factions to work for reconciliation and stability in the country. Amen.



FRIDAY 22

Father God, we lift to you all Yemeni Christians facing daily persecution and hardship. Comfort them as they strive to live out their faith in a hostile land. Strengthen the church in Yemen and may Christians inspire and encourage each other to spread your word of truth, hope and life. In Jesus' name. Amen.



SATURDAY 23

Heavenly Father, please bless all those working to reach the suffering people in Yemen with aid. Protect them as they distribute food and hygiene kits, medicine and water. Also as they help prevent the further spread of disease. We ask that you bring relief to those who are suffering. Amen.

Yemen, sometimes spelt Yaman, officially the Republic of Yemen, is a country at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia. It is the second-largest Arab sovereign state in the peninsula, occupying 527,970 square kilometres. The coastline stretches for about 2,000 kilometres.

Since 2015, a civil war has been raging between forces loyal to President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi and those supporting Houthi rebels. Both claim to constitute the official government of Yemen. The people living there are struggling to survive in what is currently the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. Over 24 million people need urgent aid, including safe water, food and sanitation. The country is on the brink of famine. Tragically, over 85,000 children have already died from hunger or disease since 2015.

Charities such as Tearfund and Save the Children are working in Yemen to help protect people from diseases such as cholera and diphtheria. They are also providing safe water, food, plus seeds and tools to enable people to grow their own vegetables.

May 24th - May 30th

THIS WEEK'S THEME

'I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.'

Jeremiah 31: 25

HOLIDAY CLUBS



SUNDAY 24

Merciful Father, we give thanks for church workers and volunteers, for their passion and commitment in planning holiday clubs, camps and other outreach events that introduce children and young people to you. Amen.



MONDAY 25

Lord of our lives, help us to realise that measuring success at a holiday club does not have to mean getting children into church on a Sunday. But that it is about getting children to come to a safe space where they feel they belong and can explore faith. Amen.



TUESDAY 26

Generous Saviour, help us to realise that having both young and old volunteers to support at a holiday club can help build strong and lasting relationships with church members. May younger volunteers learn from the wisdom of older members and older members be encouraged by the enthusiasm of the young. Amen.



WEDNESDAY 27

Good Shepherd, for those of us who may attend a small church but want to start a holiday club, help us not to be overambitious. Instead, please show us how to adapt the holiday club format to our resources and time available. May we not be afraid to borrow help from other churches in our local area. In your name, Amen.



THURSDAY 28

Gracious Lord, we know how volunteering on holiday camps can be a formative and influential experience for young Christians. Please help them to grow in their faith as their understanding and trust in you increases. Amen.



FRIDAY 29

Everlasting Father, we pray for the 95% of under 18s in England and Wales who do not go to church. May they be encouraged by Christian friends to attend a holiday club or camp this summer. Please prepare their hearts to encounter you; the living God. Amen.



SATURDAY 30

Eternal God, we bring before you charities like Oasis who provide food for children who would otherwise go hungry during the summer holidays, as they won't be having school meals. Thank you that they are able to provide nourishing meals for children in some of the most deprived areas of the UK. Amen.

Summer holiday clubs and camps have been organised by Christian churches and charities for many years. They tend to run for all or part of the six week summer holiday period. They are usually of two types: residential and non-residential. Charities such as Scripture Union and Counties organise many of these clubs and camps. Each of these events is unique, but they all share the core values of fun, friendship and faith exploration.

Feedback has shown that these holidays are a great experience. There is usually a huge range of fun on offer, from camping in tents to sleeping in log cabins; from outdoor activity centres to luxury boarding schools.

Children and young people can choose from multi-activity residential holidays with a mix of sport, adventure, arts and crafts, fun and games. Or maybe go for a specialist holiday, which focuses on a specific activity. For example, horse riding, sailing, motor sport, performing arts and baking.



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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