

'PRAYER - THE FIRST BEAT'

RHYTHM OF DISCIPLESHIP



Written by Revd. Neil Cook
Team Rector of Church Wigan

'When I pray, coincidences happen. When I don't, they don't.' Thus spoke the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, to critics questioning the value of prayer.

Prayer is the bedrock on which our relationship with God is established. It reminds us that our faith is not primarily about what we do, but about who we are: that we have been chosen by God's mysterious grace to be his children to whom he reveals himself. And surely the healthiest parent-child relationships are those where there is much open, loving and honest communication. That's why prayer is the first 'beat' in our rhythm of discipleship.

I'm sure we all agree with this. Nevertheless, it remains a sad cliché that the smallest meeting in any church is when it comes together to pray. Yes, we all 'say our prayers,' and rightly so. But we often struggle to live up to the ways of the early church that often 'lifted their voices together to God' and, when they prayed, 'the house in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly' (Acts 4.23-31).

If we want to be a church that helps people to grow as disciples of Christ, we must start with prayer. We must encourage each other in our personal daily connection with God, listening as well as asking, while not neglecting the shared aspect of praying together. After all, we would be foolish to forget the Lord's own promise:








'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them' (Matthew 18.20).

Prayer doesn't replace action. But it helps ensure that our action is Spirit-led and, again in God's mysterious grace, gives us access to the power of heaven.

Here's some practical steps you can take:

- Does your church have a prayer group or meeting? Give it a go. If not, start by inviting two or three from church to meet with you to pray. Keep it simple; your church leader can give you useful resources.
- If you have access to Facebook, join Morning Prayer at 9am, Monday-Saturday, on the Church Wigan page. Via the livestream you can pray and interact with others.
- Take part in wider Church Wigan prayer events. Many of you have benefitted from **Thy Kingdom Come**, where millions commit to pray each day between Ascension and Pentecost, this year 14th-24th May. As well as special resources, there will be a prayer gathering open to all in the evening of Thursday 21st May. Such gatherings are moving, uplifting and meaningful; please come along! Details will be circulated through your local church.

See overleaf for many other important things that will happen over the next couple of months.

- Breathe In...**
-  **PRAY** - connecting with God, listening as well as speaking.
 -  **READ [HEAR]** - the message of the bible.
 -  **LEARN** - the way of faith and wisdom through example and story.
 -  **RESTORE** - learning to trust God to stop, rest and fill up our faith tank.
- Breathe Out...**
-  **TELL** - sharing our story of the difference Jesus has made in our life.
 -  **SERVE** - connecting with others in the search for hope, dignity and justice.
 -  **GIVE** - living a life of generosity - 'freely you have received; freely give.'

Article continued overleaf...

Article continued...

Annual meetings: If you're a member of a parish, this is for you. You can find out about our finances, who's working on your behalf, and plans for the future. Get informed!

Working Together Conference, 16th May: This is an important morning event for all who serve on the 'frontline' of church - opening up, verging for funerals, counting money, looking after the building, to name but a few. Details about how to sign up can be found in this newsletter.

Deanery Synod: The Deanery Synod now spends more time addressing societal issues that face us, and already has discussed the impact of the decriminalisation of abortion bill and the need for Free School Meals for all primary school children. Coming up in June, we'll explore what's around the corner for the Church of England.

Whatever is in store, we know that our life is hidden with Christ in God. Keep trusting, keep praying.

Rev. Neil Cook

The Well - Dates & Speakers

 **Sunday 3rd May | 7pm - 9pm**
St Mark's Church, Newtown

 **Sunday 7th June | 7pm - 9pm**
St Mark's Church, Newtown

This May and June, we will be continuing our journey into exploring the 'Rhythms of Discipleship'; practical ways to grow in faith through prayer, learning, rest, generosity, service, and sharing our story.

Join us in May as Antony Billington will explore the 'Read' rhythm and in June as Rev. Kelvin Bolton explores the 'Tell' rhythm.

Missed the last service? Don't worry - you can catch up on previous services on the Church Wigan YouTube Channel!



 YouTube

World Book Day @ the Deanery

For World Book Day, students in Year 7 and 8 enjoyed a special prayer space inspired by *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis. Hosted by the Wigan Next Gen team, the space gave students the opportunity to explore the story, learn more about its author, and try different approaches to prayer through interactive activities. Thank you to the Wigan Next Gen team for creating such an engaging and thoughtful experience for the students.



Prayer Points for May & June

1. Peace for our unsettled World
2. Local Elections on 7th May
3. Hiring of the next Next Generation Team Leader - for wisdom in choosing the individual that God is calling to take on the role.

Deanery Synod

The next Deanery Synod meeting will be held on 30th June. Archdeacon Simon Fisher will be visiting to host a discussion and explore what's around the corner for the Church of England. If you would like to be a part of this discussion, please email enquiries@churchwigan.org.

18-25's Group

Are you 18-24 and looking for a safe space to go further on your faith journey, deepen your relationship with God and enjoy time in fellowship? Then come along to 'Mosaic', our young adults group. We meet the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month, 7-9pm at St Mark's Church, Newtown. Hope to see you there!

Thy Kingdom Come

Thy Kingdom Come: 10 Days of Prayer runs from Thursday 14th to Sunday 24th May, ending on Pentecost. This year's theme is "God With Us."

During this time, we're encouraged to pray for five people in our lives—that they may experience the life-changing love of God and choose to follow Him. Who will you pray for this year?

On Thursday 21st at 7:30pm, there will be a United Worship and Prayer evening (venue to be confirmed).

You can visit the Thy Kingdom Come website to download resources such as a prayer journal and novena. There are also videos available under the Resources section, along with materials for children. You can also sign up to receive daily emails throughout the 10 days, offering helpful guidance and encouragement for prayer.

For more information about 'Thy Kingdom Come' and how you can get involved, scan the QR code or visit:

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global>



Mothers' Union - Dementia Friends & 150 Year Anniversary

On Saturday 28th March, members of the Mothers' Union attended a Dementia Friends training session at St James's House in Liverpool.

Mother's Union member, Rachel Wilkinson reflected: *"The session was incredibly informative, giving us valuable insights and understanding. We're looking forward to sharing what we've learned with our branches and parishes."*

Well done to all involved! It's wonderful to see the Mother's Union members developing the skills and confidence to support those living with dementia in their communities.

The Mother's Union are also celebrating their 150th Anniversary this year! For more information about the history of the Mother's Union and their incredible impact, scan the QR code.



Sports Chaplaincy Update

“You’re (CWSC) needed because of the state of the world...”

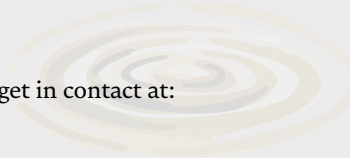
- Quote from someone impacted by the Sports Chaplaincy

The other week, we started our regular team meeting with a prayer and then shared stories about what we’ve experienced and seen God do within Sports Chaplaincy. Over the months, we’ve had opportunities to pray for and chat with people of all ages, as well as support someone running a 60-mile ultramarathon! As Mark, one of our sports chaplains, put it so well, “It’s like ‘dropping a pebble in some water and watching the ripples.’”

We’re seeing little ripples all around - whether its people recognising our presence or being able to share our faith in a broken world, God is moving. Over this next season, we want to be a team of God-loving chaplains who enable others to ‘spread the gold’ in their own clubs, sharing hope where it feels like there is none.

Lizzy Cook,
CWSC Coordinator (if applicable: get in contact at:
lizzy.cook@churchwigan.org)

  /ChurchWiganSportsChaplaincy



Re-Ordering of All Saints Church, Wigan Town Centre

Exciting news from All Saints Church Wigan – “We’ve received Faculty approval from the Chancellor of Liverpool Diocese to begin work on our Re-Ordering project at the back of Wigan Parish Church. The work, whilst preserving the beauty and history of the church, will provide extra functionality by creating a meeting room and a wonderful cafe space.

Work will commence on Monday 27th April at 9:00am, marking an important step forward as we continue to develop our worship and mission in Wigan town centre. We’ll also be taking time to pray over the work, our town centre, and all that lies ahead for the life of the church.”

Stay tuned on Facebook for monthly photo updates of the work.



Farewell to Andy Brown

Congratulations to Andy Brown, our Next Generation Team Leader, on his upcoming marriage to Rachel this June!

As Andy begins this new chapter, he will be stepping down from his role at Church Wigan and relocating to Peterborough to start his married life.



We are deeply grateful for Andy’s leadership and the lasting impact he has made through his work with the Next Generation team during his time at Church Wigan. We wish Andy and Rachel every blessing as they begin their life together, and pray their future will be filled with joy, love, and happiness.

St Matthew’s Boys Brigade

Calling all past members of the 14th Wigan Boys’ Bridge - Highfield.

We are sad to announce that the 14th Wigan Boys’ Brigade has had to close after serving the community of Highfield for over 80 years. The group is looking to bring together as many people as possible, from BB past and present, in a special Commemorative Family Parade Service, where the work of the group will be celebrated. Please see the service details below:

 **Sunday 10th May | 10:30am**
St Matthew’s Church, Highfield

Working Together Conference

 **Saturday 16th May | 9:30am - 12:30pm**
St Thomas’ Church, Ashton in Makerfield

The fifth annual Working Together Conference will be taking place on 16th May 2026! This event is all about bringing together our frontline volunteers – the people who keep our churches safe, open, and working well, from churchwardens and assistant wardens to finance teams and local leaders. There is a fantastic line-up of speakers and bacon butties and pastries will be available upon arrival. Doors open at 9am for a 9:30am start.

If you are hoping to come along, please scan the QR code and fill in the short form.



New WDT Team Member!

Lucy Haigh
PA to the Team Rector

Lucy is the newest member of the Wigan Deanery Trust team and is joining us as Rev. Neil Cook’s PA. She will also be taking on clerking responsibilities for the Wigan Deanery Trust and Joint Council. She brings with her a wealth of experience in IT and organisation and we are so excited to have her on board!



In her spare time, Lucy runs the ‘Wellspring’ worshipping community at St Paul’s Primary School and loves nothing more than looking after her lovely grand daughter, Iyah.

Green Orgs CSR Award Winner!

We are excited to announce that Wigan Deanery Trust and Church Wigan have won a prestigious International CSR Excellence Award 2026, recognising outstanding achievements and leadership in delivering lasting benefits for people and the planet.

This honour highlights our commitment to sustainability and ethical practice, specifically in our use of LED bulbs across our churches. Thank you to Dave Blissett-Williams (our Properties Officer) for leading the charge and to our churches for their ongoing commitment to making our church communities more environmentally sustainable.



for companies that have a heart

**THE INTERNATIONAL
CSR EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

COMING UP IN MAY/JUNE! 

Turn over for a Calendar of events for the months of May & June



To scan a QR code, open your phone’s camera and point it steadily at the QR code, making sure that it’s clearly visible on your screen. A notification or link will appear—tap it to open the content in your browser or app.

Events

ACROSS CHURCH WIGAN THIS MAY / JUNE 2026

'The Well' Service

 **Sunday 3rd May | 7pm - 9pm**
St Mark's Church, Newtown

 **Sunday 7th June | 7pm - 9pm**
St Mark's Church, Newtown

Ukulele Concert

 **Friday 15th May | 7pm**
@ St Peter's Church, Hindley

Ukulele concert with music by Hindley Ukulele Group. Tickets are available from church, online via the St Peter's Facebook page, or by contacting 07742 571476.

Cost: Adult Tickets - £5 & Child Tickets - £2 (includes refreshments).

Come and join us for a fun and uplifting evening!

Strawberry Tea

 **Saturday 13th June | 2pm - 4pm**
@ St Peter's Church, Hindley

Cost: Adult Tickets - £5 & Child Tickets are FREE

Tickets are available from Church, online via St Peter's Facebook page or by contacting 07539 703023.

Tickets are limited, so buy early to avoid disappointment!

Crafts for children - Quiz - Card Tombola

Summer Fairs in Chapelfields

 **Saturday 20th June | 11am - 2pm**
@ St John's Church, Hindley Green

 **Saturday 20th June | 1pm - 4pm**
@ St John's Church, Abram

Tombola games, raffles & prizes, food & drink and many stalls. Lots of fun for the whole family!

Bingo @ St Anne's

 **Every Tuesday from 14th April | 1pm**
@St Anne's Community Garden

Come along for an afternoon of Bingo and fun.

Peace of Mind Dementia Cafe

 **Tuesday 28th April & 19th May | 1:30pm - 3pm**
@ St Andrew's Church, Garswood, WN4 0TU

Come along to the Peace of Mind Dementia Cafe on...

Tuesday 28th April for lots of fun doing 'Armchair Aerobics' & Tuesday 19th May to sing along with GloSing.

Come and enjoy lots of fun, laughter and plenty of Tea, Coffee & Cake. All welcome!

BBQ @ St Anne's Community Garden

 **Sunday 10th May | From 12:30pm**
@St Anne's Community Garden

Cost: £7 for Adults & £5 for Children.

Either pay on the day, or to book in advance, contact Susan on 07506 544890.

Thy Kingdom Come Worship & Prayer Event

 **Thursday 21st May | 7pm**
Venue to be announced on Facebook & CW Website

Doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start.

Evensong @ St Luke's, Orrell

 **Sunday 10th May & Sunday 14th June | 6:30pm**
St Luke's Church, Orrell

History Weekend

 **Saturday 23rd May & Sunday 24th May | 11am - 3pm**
@ St David's Church, Haigh

Come along and dive into the past.

'Lifted' Prayer & Worship Evening

 **Monday 29th June | 7:30pm**
Venue TBC

Come along for an evening of worship, prayer and stories of God at work. The venue will be confirmed on the Church Wigan Facebook page closer to the time.

2026 Pantry Opening Times

The Pantry @ St. Nathaniel's

Open Thursdays | 9am - 12noon

The Pantry @ Christ Church, Ince

Open Thursdays | 9am - 12noon

Tom's Pantry @ St James', Poolstock

Open Tuesdays | 9:30am - 11:45am

Wednesdays | 9:30am - 11:45am

Saturdays | 11am - 2pm (alongside Faith Cafe)

Annie's Pantry @ St Anne's, Beech Hill

Open Mondays | 11am - 1pm

(Welcome Space / Cafe 10:30am - 12:30pm)

Ashton Pantry @ St Thomas Church Hall, Ashton

Pay-as-you-feel Cafe open Mondays 12noon - 1pm

Open Tuesdays | 11am - 12noon

Thursdays | 2pm - 3pm

Sundays | 3pm - 4pm

JEDS Pop-Up Pantry @ St David's Church Hall, Haigh

Open Tuesdays | 5:30pm - 7pm

JEDS Pantry @ St Stephen's Church, Haigh

Open Tuesdays | 9am - 11am

(Welcome Space until 12pm)

The Pantry @ Holy Trinity, Downall Green

Open Fridays | 9am - 10am

Aidan's Pantry @ St Aidan's,

Open Fridays | 11am - 1pm

Pop Up Pantry @ Marsh Green Library

Open Wednesdays | 9:30am - 10:30am