

Prayer Network

Prayer ATTERS

JANUARY - JUNE 2022

Greetings, Prayer Matters readers,

Happy New Year to you all!

I am delighted to be able to share with you the January–June 2022 print edition of *Prayer Matters*. For those who do not have access to Facebook or the Salvation Army website, or who like to have your own printed edition which you can touch and hold, highlight text or make notes in, you will no doubt welcome its return and I encourage you to continue in journeying with God in this way. I am also aware that we are living in changing times with an ever-increasing need to be mindful of the Earth's resources, reduce our carbon footprint and consider the effects of climate change. Bearing all this in mind, I do encourage you to get in touch if you would prefer to download your own copy or link in through Facebook. We are interested in your feedback, so please let us have your comments by emailing saprayernetwork@salvationarmy.org.uk.

This month we also welcome the return of our annual Encounter Prayer Gathering at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick which takes place from Friday 21 to Sunday 23 January. The theme for our gathering is 'What is the Spirit saying to the Church?' There will be some teaching, but mostly we are going to get on with listening, using all sorts of different methods, from Bible study to nature walks, from art and craft to story telling, from silence to play. We are delighted to have with us our Territorial Leaders, Commissioners Anthony and Gill Cotterill, who will join us on our listening journey. Please pray for our speakers and delegates, that God will bless, challenge and inspire us as we listen. If you are hoping to attend, do book your place soon to avoid disappointment.

In this edition of *Prayer Matters* our Lent Prayer Focus has been written by Lyndall Bywater specifically to link in with our theme from the Prayer Gathering. Lyndall encourages us to explore and develop different ways of listening to God and engaging with him throughout the Lent period, through Scripture, nature and shared activity. I encourage you to take an early look at the Lent Prayer Focus as Lyndall has suggested activities which could be included in worship services.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed to this edition. I never cease to be amazed and blessed by the way in which God inspires our writers, so often bringing unity and connection between the prayers.

Finally, a thank you to you all for your continued encouragement and support. We pray that God will bless and equip you as you continue in prayer.

God bless you all,

Chris

Major Christine Kingscott Assistant Secretary for Spiritual Life Development

Bible quotations from the New International Version (2011) unless otherwise stated.

JANUARY

BEING TOGETHER, LIVING IN GOD'S COVENANT FOCUS

A LIEUT-COLONEL JAYNE ROBERTS (SECRETARY FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT)

As 2022 dawns, full of hope and promise, may we welcome this new year in the assurance that God is holding us all.

E SATURDAY 1 JANUARY

We have all lived through turbulent times in the past couple of years as a pandemic has swept the globe. Yet there have been many unexpected blessings as we have realised how precious it is to simply be together – in households, in corps, churches and so many other settings. Let's thank God today for family members and friends who enrich our lives.

E SUNDAY 2 JANUARY

On this first Sunday of the new year, take time for prayer and quiet reflection. Listen to God's voice and be encouraged; 'Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you'(Deuteronomy 31:8 *NLT*).

E MONDAY 3 JANUARY

At the start of the week, how good it is to recognise that God is with us! Take strength as you read Deuteronomy 31:8 (*NLT*): 'He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.' May this truth resonate with you.

E TUESDAY 4 JANUARY

We continue to focus on our amazing God who guides us and gives us what we need.

'He provides food for those who honour him; he never forgets his covenant' (Psalm 111:5 *GNB*). We praise God for his provision. How grateful we are for our physical daily bread and for spiritual nourishment through daily prayer and Bible reading.



E WEDNESDAY 5 JANUARY

'He set his people free and made an eternal covenant with them' (Psalm 111:9 *GNB*). The psalmist considers the outcome of an event in history that God's people will never forget. Ask for God's guidance to move forward from your experiences of the Covid pandemic and the effect it had on you personally.

E THURSDAY 6 JANUARY

As you pray today, and for the following couple of days, name a characteristic of God that has been particularly important for you in recent days. His love, his faithfulness, his forgiveness may come to your mind. What is he saying to you?

FRIDAY 7 JANUARY

God is our Creator, he is our Shepherd, he is our Father. Take time with one of these definitions. How does it shape your relationship with God?

E SATURDAY 8 JANUARY

God is just, righteous, holy and completely beyond our understanding. Yet he has given us his son Jesus to be our Saviour. Thank you, Lord, for your amazing love and grace. Father God, may we continue to live in this new covenant, your redeemed people.

E SUNDAY 9 JANUARY - COVENANT SUNDAY

Being Together, Living in God's Covenant is celebrated today in the United Kingdom and Ireland Territory. Our covenant with God begins in a personal decision to follow Jesus; and then, as we learn and grow spiritually, we become part of a worldwide family of believers. Lord God, please remove any barriers that are in the way of your people truly being together.

E MONDAY 10 JANUARY

Being together in God's covenant is being part of a spiritual community and, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, 'It is a gift of God that we cannot claim. It is not an ideal which we must realise; it is rather a reality created by God in which we may participate.' Thank you, God, for this gift.

E TUESDAY 11 JANUARY

'A Christian community is made of people who gather around the transforming presence of Christ so they can do the will of God' (Ruth Haley Barton).

Pray for the Christian community that you are part of, that each person may know the presence of Jesus and discern God's will.

E WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY

'Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him' (Mark 3:13). To gather around the transforming presence of Jesus involves his call and our choice. Pray to hear and respond.

E THURSDAY 13 JANUARY

Having called his disciples, Jesus appointed twelve *'that they might be with him'* (Mark 3:14). The priority is to be with *him* before they engage in the work he sends them out to do. Pray about how that might change your perspective.

FRIDAY 14 JANUARY

Being together in God's covenant will include being with people from whom we might think very differently on all kinds of issues. Let us pray for unity in our diversity and the wisdom to learn to disagree well!

🖻 SATURDAY 15 JANUARY

Being together means sharing fellowship with all kinds of people. The Salvation Army aims to be an inclusive church where everyone finds welcome and can develop their relationship with God. Pray for those people who have not found the welcome they could expect. May we continue to pray, work and plan for a Salvation Army where everyone is truly welcomed and affirmed.

E SUNDAY 16 JANUARY

Major Joy Webb wrote: 'Love is a place where you are always welcome, / Love is an open hand stretched out to care; / Love is of God, and where his name is honoured / Love is there.' As we embrace a new season let us reaffirm our desire to love God and love others.

NORTH LONDON FOCUS

A MAJOR MESHIEL BROWN (NORTH LONDON DIVISIONAL PRAYER COORDINATOR)

North London is a diverse area of the country, with every appointment different from the next. Some wear uniforms and



some don't, the variety of worship styles are influenced by a whole world of cultures, no one like another.

With that in mind, this week we focus on diversity and inclusion, what it means to invite the whosoever to join us at the table.

E MONDAY 17 JANUARY

Jesus talks with the woman at the well - Read John 4:1-27.

Verse 7: 'Will you give me a drink?' Jesus chose to ask a Samaritan woman. Who would Jesus want us/you to include?

E TUESDAY 18 JANUARY

Verse 9: 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' What might it be like to show love to those who think we/you don't care?

E WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY

Verse 14: 'Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.' Jesus includes the 'whoever', but who are we/you missing out? Ask Jesus to show you the 'whoever'.

E THURSDAY 20 JANUARY

Verse 20: 'You Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.' Do we/you think that some people just don't belong and need to go elsewhere? Allow God to change those thoughts.

FRIDAY 21 JANUARY

Verse 23: 'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.' In the Spirit and in truth ... ponder those words. What is Jesus saying to us/you?

E SATURDAY 22 JANUARY

Verse 26: 'I, the one speaking to you – I am he.' Jesus declares himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman ... in her day a nobody! Do we write people off? Or do we see them as Jesus does?

E SUNDAY 23 JANUARY

Verse 27: 'Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

They know better than to question Jesus' actions. Jesus welcomes ALL. Do we/you? If not, why not?

As people meet this weekend for the Prayer Gathering, let's ask Jesus to speak clearly to us about the way forward for The Salvation Army as a church, but also for each of us as we seek to bring God's Kingdom to the whosoever.

GOODNESS OF GOD FOCUS

å NIK KING (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AND CREATIVE ARTS)

SETTING THE SCENE

Based on the Bethel song 'Goodness of God' by Ed Cash, Ben Fielding, Brian Johnson, Jenn Johnson, Jason Ingram.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0FBb6hnwTo

Each prayer for this week is based on a portion of the lyrics of this song. Have a listen to the song each morning whilst you are praying, meditate over each line and ask God to reveal himself to you.

I love you, Lord, for your mercy never failed me, All my days I've been held in your hands. From the moment that I wake up Until I lay my head, Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

And all my life you have been faithful, And all my life you have been so, so good, With every breath that I am able I will sing of the goodness of God.

I love your voice, you have led me through the fire, And in darkest night you are close like no other. I've known you as a Father, I've known you as a friend, And I have lived in the goodness of God.

'Cause your goodness is running after, it's running after me, Your goodness is running after, it's running after me. With my life laid down I'm surrendered now, I give you everything, 'Cause your goodness is running after, it's running after me.



B MONDAY 24 JANUARY

○ 'I LOVE YOU, LORD, FOR YOUR MERCY NEVER FAILS ME'

Take some time this morning to tell God you love him and what he means to you. 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness' (Lamentations 3:22-23 *NRSV*). Thank God for new mercies each day.

E TUESDAY 25 JANUARY

⊘ 'ALL MY DAYS I'VE BEEN HELD IN YOUR HANDS'

This morning, as you listen to the song, acknowledge and thank God that he has carried you, is with you and goes before you. You can rest assured he has you safely held in his hands.

E WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY

⊙ 'FROM THE MOMENT THAT I WAKE UP UNTIL I LAY MY HEAD, OH, I WILL SING OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD'

Perhaps set yourself a challenge today: instead of having a nominated prayer time, chat with God at regular intervals throughout the day. What do you notice about how your day goes or how you feel? When you lay down your head this evening, thank God that you have been able to journey with him.

THURSDAY 27 JANUARY

\odot 'AND ALL MY LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL, AND ALL MY LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN SO, SO GOOD'

Today, take some time to reflect on the times in your life when God has showed himself to be faithful to you. Father, thank you for showing your goodness to me, even in times when I didn't recognise or acknowledge it. Help me become more attuned to your voice and the Holy Sprit's guidance in my life. Amen.

FRIDAY 28 JANUARY

\odot 'WITH EVERY BREATH THAT I AM ABLE I WILL SING OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD'

'I will sing of the goodness and loving kindness of the Lord forever; With my mouth I will make known your faithfulness from generation to generation' (Psalm 89:1 *AMP*). Here is a challenge that may be easier to say than put into practice. Pray for God's help as you strive to sing of his goodness each day.

E SATURDAY 29 JANUARY () 'I LOVE YOUR VOICE, YOU HAVE LED ME THROUGH THE FIRE, AND IN DARKEST NIGHT YOU ARE CLOSE LIKE NO OTHER'

'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you' (Isaiah 43:2 *ESV*). Isn't it a comfort to know that our God is not only going to go through trials with us but protect us too – what an amazing God! Thank God for that truth today.

E SUNDAY 30 JANUARY

\odot 'I'VE KNOWN YOU AS A FATHER, I'VE KNOWN YOU AS A FRIEND'

There are many names we can call God. What a privilege that we can call on God as our heavenly Father but also our friend! He longs to spend time with us, to share with him and get to know him on a deeper level, just as we would an earthly father or friend. Spend some time sharing with God what is on your heart and mind, and ask for direction and guidance.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S FOCUS

A MAJOR HELEN SCHOFIELD (TERRITORIAL YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S SECRETARY)

SETTING THE SCENE

The Territorial Youth and Children's Workers Conference takes place on Saturday 5 February at William Booth College.

The theme for the day is REACH.

In the age of the social media celebrity, 'reach' is everything. With enough reach, a person can attract millions of followers and command tens of thousands of pounds for a single post. Reach can also feel like the silver bullet for the Church. If we can just reach enough people with our programmes, we'll be able to find growth. But reach isn't about numbers. It isn't about improving our influence and impressions. It's about connection with the God that reached out to us, through a child that was carried into the world in the arms of a teenage girl. It's about how we carry that same child



in the spaces we inhabit through acts of love and grace, bringing justice and transformation into our churches and communities.

And so we have invited youth and children's workers to gather for a day of conversation, resourcing and inspiration, to reach up and connect with the vision God has for them, reach out to those around them and be caught by the God who reaches out to them, his beloved.

This week we are going to spend time praying for our children and youth, those who work with them and the places they are found. We will also pray for the conference.

E MONDAY 31 JANUARY

Today take time to thank God for the youth and children's workers that you know – both volunteers and those in paid employment. Take time to name each one before God, praying that they are given all the wisdom they need to lead this generation of young people. Perhaps you could send a message of encouragement, letting them know that you are praying for them.

FEBRUARY

E TUESDAY 1 FEBRUARY

Today let's focus on our children. Think of those children that you know – those who are part of our corps family and those who are part of our own families. For some people reading this you may think that you don't have any children in your corps, and that may well be true. But you do have children that you are connected to. Pray for them – bring their names to your corps prayer meetings – talk about them, both the good and the bad times – let them know that your corps family care about them and long to support them.

E WEDNESDAY 2 FEBRUARY

One of the places where our young people spend most of their time is school. Take time today to pray for your local school, both for the young people who attend and for all those who work there. Perhaps let the school know you are praying for them and ask them for specific requests. Perhaps your corps could adopt a local school, working with the PTA to see how best you can support and even be in partnership with them.

E THURSDAY 3 FEBRUARY

Today pray for our older young people, those in their teenage years. Many struggle with their identity. Pray that they know with deep assurance that they are a child of the beloved. Make sure you speak affirming words of life over them.

FRIDAY 4 FEBRUARY

Take time this day to pray for parents, those who are part of our corps family and those in our communities. Pray that those who love Jesus take time to pray with their children. Pray that talking about Jesus with their children is as natural as breathing. Pray for those who don't yet know Jesus, that through the faces of their own children they encounter the risen Jesus. Perhaps think about the parents that need some encouragement; it may be someone at the corps, it may be someone in your street. Perhaps you could be the encouraging person in that parent's life.

E SATURDAY 5 FEBRUARY

Today pray for the youth and children's workers conference. Pray that all the practical aspects go well. Pray that each person who gathers will reach up and connect with the vision God has for them, reach out to those around them and be caught by the God who reaches out to them, his beloved.

SUNDAY 6 FEBRUARY

Today pray for all those who attended the conference. Pray that it will not be just a good day to be together, but that the things that they have heard and experienced will be put to good use in their local situation.

GENDER JUSTICE FOCUS

$\ensuremath{ \mathring{}}$ hayley still (the salvation army international development uk)

B MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY

The Salvation Army International Development UK supports projects across six thematic areas, one of which is gender justice. However, it is also an important part of the projects that fall into the other five areas: anti-trafficking, clean water, emergency response, food security and income generation. Ensuring women play an active role in community development projects is essential for their success. Pray for these projects: for equal and active participation of women, for



transformation of attitudes towards women and encouragement of the involvement of women and girls in decision making.

E TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY

Humankind was created in God's image – men and women equal in the eyes of God. Yet women are disproportionately affected by poverty, the climate crisis and gender-based violence. Domestic violence is a universal issue, not bound by social status, wealth or gender. However, most victims are female with one in three women having experienced intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Pray for a world in which gender justice is a reality and for an end to gender-based violence.

E WEDNESDAY 9 FEBRUARY

Each year The Salvation Army International Development UK works in partnership with the Family Ministries Unit to create and run the Helping-Hand Appeal. During 2022, the focus of the Appeal is gender justice with the resources using stories from The Salvation Army in Tres Arroyos, Argentina. Pray for the success of this Appeal, that corps and group members in the United Kingdom and Ireland Territory will have open hearts and minds as they use the resources and raise funds to support international projects.

E THURSDAY 10 FEBRUARY

In Tres Arroyos, Argentina, The Salvation Army is supporting women who have been or are currently experiencing domestic violence. In this safe space women are welcomed, cared for, listened to and supported through their journey. Pray for the women who are part of the group as they share their story and begin to heal, and for the women who are still suffering alone. May they find the opportunity and courage to reach out for help and find safety from their abusers.

E FRIDAY 11 FEBRUARY

'And if one person is vulnerable to attack, two can drive the attacker away. As the saying goes, "A rope made of three strands is not quickly broken."' (Ecclesiastes 4:12 *The Voice*)

As part of the group therapy sessions, women are invited to share in a supportive and non-judgemental setting. In this space women have the opportunity to collectively find personal solutions and find ways of breaking the cycle of violence they are in. Through these sessions, women have found solidarity and sanctuary. Pray for the friendships that have been made through these groups and for the courage that is nurtured here.

E SATURDAY 12 FEBRUARY

Alongside the provision of group therapy for women, The Salvation Army in Tres Arroyos runs sessions for children aged 7 to 14 years old who are exposed to violence at home. The Learning Through Play programme uses fun activities to encourage children to find nonviolent responses to different situations. Pray that these young people will be safe from harm and that these sessions may help to break the cycle of violence within families.

E SUNDAY 13 FEBRUARY

We know that domestic violence is a global issue and one that affects people within The Salvation Army in the UK. As corps and groups use this year's Helping-Hand resources, there will be women, children and men who have a personal experience of abuse. We pray that leaders will be mindful and sensitive to this, open to hearing and supporting those who reach out, and that those people affected will have the courage and opportunity to seek help.

E MONDAY 14 FEBRUARY

Valentine's Day is intended to be a celebration of love, though some cynics may say it is merely a money-making scheme of chocolatiers and greetings card companies. Whatever your view, today will be challenging for many for a variety of reasons.

Romantic partnerships and marriage are supposed to be the closest of relationships, where you share life with the person you love and trust the most and with whom you can truly be yourself. Intimate partner violence is a violation of this trust and is contradictory to biblical teaching on loving and faithful relationships. Today, pray for people trapped in abusive relationships; for freedom and for healing.

FOCUS ON THE LORD'S PROMISES

A KAREN FINDLAY (CORPS SERGEANT-MAJOR, WELLINGBOROUGH)

E TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY

Deuteronomy 31:6 – Lord, you promise never to leave me alone.

Lord, even when I can't feel your presence, you are there. Thank you for your faithfulness. Teach me to rest in your presence and not to be afraid or anxious. Lord, I trust you.



E WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY

Romans 8:28 – Lord, you promise to work all things together for the good of those who love you.

Lord, I thank you for the reassurance of the promise that you are working in my life for my good. Help me to trust in you.

THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY

Exodus 14:14 – Lord, you promise to fight for me.

Lord, I pause and stand before you acknowledging that you are God and you are in control. I rest in the promise of your protection.

FRIDAY 18 FEBRUARY

James 1:5; John 14:13-14 – Lord, you promise to supply wisdom. All I need do is ask.

As I come before you today, I ask for wisdom knowing that you will give it. Lord, I rest in you and listen. Give me the courage to act.

SATURDAY 19 FEBRUARY

Isaiah 40: 28-31 – Lord, you promise that I can turn to you for strength.

Lord, you give limitless power to the weak and increase the power of those who need it. Today, lift me up on the wings of eagles that I may soar with you above all the challenges of the day.

SUNDAY 20 FEBRUARY

John 1:12; Psalm 51:17 – Lord, you promise to forgive me.

Lord, I acknowledge the amazing grace that you freely give to me. I praise you for the truth that I can walk in the freedom of your forgiveness.

E MONDAY 21 FEBRUARY

Jude v24 – Lord, you promise to keep me from falling.

Lord, I come before you with confidence because of your unfailing love for me. I move from this place with confidence because you walk with me and will keep me from falling. You are a great God!

DIVISIONAL PRAYER FOCUS

A CAPTAIN SARA DUFFY (PRAYER CO-ORDINATOR, WEST SCOTLAND DIVISION)

E TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY

'I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours' (John 17:9 *ESV*).

Being the prayer co-ordinator and able to pray with those across the West Scotland Division is a privilege. Often I get prayer requests to pray for an individual, families, corps, officers, Lifehouses, centre managers and staff. Please join me in praying for the people of West Scotland today.

E WEDNESDAY 23 FEBRUARY

On a monthly basis I produce a prayer calendar leaflet. On each day there will be one or two groups to pray for, ensuring that officers and corps, the DHQ team, service hub, Lifehouses and Housing First, centre managers and staff, charity shops, retired officers, officers' children, along with the emergency services, are surrounded in prayer. Please join me in praying for these different groups of people today.

E THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY

'Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed'(James 5:16 *ESV*). During the Covid pandemic we have all had to adapt to different ways of working, and praying with others has mostly had to be over Zoom. We get together for a Divisional Virtual Prayer Gathering which is well attended and has been very powerful. We thank God for this opportunity.

FRIDAY 25 FEBRUARY

Because of Covid, there have been many in need of prayer. Some of our staff in our Lifehouses contracted the virus and it was a privilege to pray for them, offering help where we can. 'I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul' (3 John v2 *ESV*).

E SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY

During the Covid pandemic I really missed being able to go into corps and help set up prayer rooms/stations. I will always appreciate how I can go and do these things that I love, in order to help others in



different ways to pray. 'You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you' (Job 22:27 *ESV*).

E SUNDAY 27 FEBRUARY

Throughout the pandemic I have had the privilege to pray for a family going through some sad situations, but God has given me the chance to intercede on their behalf and I have seen answers to prayer. It's not been easy, and it's been a roller-coaster ride, but by being faithful in prayer God honours our requests. 'Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer' (Romans 12:12 *ESV*).

E MONDAY 28 FEBRUARY

Getting to know your neighbour can be an open door to prayer. During the Covid pandemic I got to know our neighbours, which led to my praying for them after finding out situations that needed prayer, mainly bereavement. God uses the situation we are in at that time to do his work, even on our own doorstep.

MARCH

E TUESDAY 1 MARCH

As we move on from the pandemic and look to the future, where do we go from here? I think we have the opportunity for new beginnings and to start new things. We need to spend time in prayer asking God what he wants us to do. 'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you' (John 15:7).

LENT FOCUS

A LYNDALL BYWATER (PRAYER NETWORK)

Becoming a Listening People

Listening to God is a subject we've touched on many times in Prayer Matters, but we come to it this year with a different emphasis. This Lent focus isn't so much about how to listen to God for specific things – answers to questions or solutions to problems – it's about how to develop the habit of listening to God all the time, no matter what we're doing. If the past two years have taught us anything, it's that our lives are fragile and our plans can be disrupted in a moment. As we look ahead, we sense the need to do things differently if the Church is to survive and thrive. The ground we're standing on isn't as solid as perhaps we thought, and we don't know what to do next. If those words sound bleak, take heart. This is the perfect moment to become a listening people – a Salvation Army which learns to stay attentive to the voice of God, open, flexible and courageous to follow the leading of the Spirit.

In her book Pursuing God's Will Together: A discernment practice for leadership groups, Ruth Haley Barton writes: 'Discernment, in a most general sense, is the capacity to recognise and respond to the presence and the activity of God, both in the ordinary moments and in the larger decisions of our lives.' (Intervarsity Press, 2012)

This Lent focus is a journey in learning more about that kind of discernment. We will practise all sorts of ways to develop listening habits, both individually and with others. Each Sunday offers an activity which you might like to use in gathered worship, so look ahead at the activity for that week if it's your job to prepare part or all of Sunday's meeting. As you work through the daily prompts, we hope and pray you will become more and more aware of the presence and activity of God in your life.

WEEK 1 - BEING INTENTIONAL

WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH - STARTING THE JOURNEY

Loving God, as we step again into the age-old season of Lent, we commit ourselves to the deeper work of listening to you with our whole being: heart, mind, soul and senses. May we hear you as we have never heard you before.

THURSDAY 3 MARCH - LISTENING WITH THE TRINITY

God is Trinity, which means that listening to God isn't like downloading a voice memo; it's more like joining a conversation. Find a copy of Rublev's famous icon, called 'The Trinity' or 'The Hospitality of Abraham', and spend some time looking at it, imagining what it might be like to be at table with God themselves.

FRIDAY 4 MARCH - RHYTHMS

A habit of listening to God requires an attentive, open-hearted posture, and that posture takes practice. Could you make a commitment to a rhythm of listening prayer throughout Lent, stopping several times each day to sit in stillness and silence, intentionally opening yourself to the voice and the presence of God?



SATURDAY 5 MARCH - OBEDIENCE

'Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it' (James 1:22, *CEV*).

Listening takes practice, but so does obeying. Why not use this Lent season to strengthen your 'obedience muscles' – listening out for the nudges the Holy Spirit gives you and acting on them, even if they seem small and insignificant.

SUNDAY 6 MARCH - LISTENING TOGETHER

A prayer to pray together:

Heavenly Father, help us to learn to hear your voice together. Forgive us when we fail to listen well to one another, or when we leave the listening to the leaders. Jesus, we long to talk with you as your disciples did, easy and honest, tender and close. Forgive us when we get caught up in activity and busyness. Holy Spirit, we welcome you in our worship. Forgive us when we drown you out or shut you down. God, help us to become a listening people.

WEEK 2 MAKING SPACE

People with a listening habit are people who make space for the Spirit to reshape their plans. Our addictions to productivity, success and busyness mean we organise our lives so completely that there's no room for God to disrupt us. We work on the principle that if there's something we need to do differently, God will shout loudly enough to get our attention. But what if God wants to whisper to us? How can we make space, not just in our diaries but in our plans and our agendas?

B MONDAY 7 MARCH - EMBRACE THE CHAOS

Perhaps you feel your life is more chaos than well-planned or productive. The Holy Spirit delights to hover over chaos and create new life out of it. At the end of a chaotic day, ask the Spirit to show you where new life is springing up.

E TUESDAY 8 MARCH - SACRED SPACE

We pack our diaries so tightly that we often leave no room for God to interject. Could you get into the habit of carving out 'sacred space' before the important things in life: times with loved ones, vital work meetings, difficult conversations etc? Instead of rushing in, give yourself half an hour to stop and soak in God's presence before it starts.

WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH - WALKING THE LONG WAY AROUND

Our busyness can stop us listening to God, but so can our routines. We do the same things in the same way, leaving no room for God to surprise us or steer our minds on to different tracks. Wherever you're going today, instead of taking your usual route, walk or drive the long way around and see what God shows you.

THURSDAY 10 MARCH - BIBLE BUGGING

Perhaps you read a Bible passage in the morning, but do you let it bug you throughout the day? Choose a verse from your reading and call it to mind at least once every half hour throughout the day (set a reminder on your phone or watch, if that helps). Each time you remember it, stop to ask yourself what it is saying about the situation you find yourself in at that moment.

FRIDAY 11 MARCH - LET BEAUTY INTERRUPT

Making space in our diaries is important, but making space in our minds and hearts is even more important, and that's where art can help us. Beautiful things stop us in our tracks and open our souls to receive from God. Spend time today looking at or listening to something you find beautiful. Don't rush and don't have an agenda. Just absorb the beauty and let God give to you.

SATURDAY 12 MARCH - THE DISRUPTION OF COMMUNITY

Other people can be profoundly disruptive to our plans. But being pulled off our own track by the needs and wants of those around us can give God room to speak to us. Is there something someone else wants you to do with them, but you've been resisting because it's inconvenient? Maybe today's the day to let them disrupt your plans.

SUNDAY 13 MARCH - MAKING SPACE IN WORSHIP

One of the simplest ways to make space for the Holy Spirit to speak when we're gathered for worship is to introduce a couple of minutes of silence between each item on the meeting plan. It makes the meeting longer, or means we can fit less in, but it forces us into a slower pace and a more intentional kind of listening.

WEEK 3 - WISDOM

When we're in the habit of listening, we find wisdom bubbling up everywhere. When there's a decision to make or a problem to solve, we



go hunting for the wisdom we need; but what if we got into the habit of hearing and absorbing the wisdom we never knew we needed?

B MONDAY 14 MARCH - EXAMEN

The Ignatian practice of Examen involves taking time each evening to look back over the day and to reflect on four questions: What was good about today? What was difficult about today? What do I regret doing today? What do I want to do better tomorrow?

Take 10 minutes each evening this week to do some Examen. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you glean wisdom from the events of that day.

TUESDAY 15 MARCH - WISE WORDS

Reflect on some of the wise words you've heard or read over the past few months. They may be words or phrases that have caught your attention, Bible verses that have stayed with you or quotes you've stumbled across. Write them down and read them through slowly. Is there a common thread? Is there a way you could act on that wisdom today?

B WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH - WISDOM PERSONIFIED

'If you wait at wisdom's doorway, longing to hear a word for every day, joy will break forth within you as you listen for what I'll say' (Proverbs 8:34 *TPT*).

In Chapter 8, the writer of Proverbs imagines wisdom as a loving, creative presence bringing life to the universe. If you have time, read the whole chapter, or simply meditate on this verse.

THURSDAY 17 MARCH - WISDOM IN LEADERSHIP

Proverbs 8:15-16 talks about how those in power need wisdom. Take time today to pray for those in local and national government, that they will be able to hear the voice of wisdom amidst the clamour of opinion.

FRIDAY 18 MARCH - WISDOM IN CREATION

Creation is God's handiwork; the natural world displays God's glory. Find a moment to get out for a walk today and take notice of what you see and hear around you. What wisdom is nature sharing with you?

E SATURDAY 19 MARCH - WISDOM IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

In an increasingly polarised society, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that everyone who agrees with us is wise, and everyone who

doesn't isn't. Take time today to read something by someone whose views you don't agree with. Read with an open mind and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the wisdom in their words.

SUNDAY 20 MARCH - THE WISDOM OF CHILDREN

Could you make room in your meeting today to hear from the children or young people in the corps? What do they hear God saying to them and to our world at the moment?

WEEK 4 - OPENNESS AND TRUST

Our experiences of listening to God are almost always affected by our sense of what God is like. If the God we've come to know is more about disapproval than affirmation, more about correction than encouragement, then we are more likely to hear disapproval and correction when we try to listen. It's well worth getting into the habit of clearing the wax of fear, shame and condemnation out of our ears so we can hear the strains of love more clearly.

MONDAY 21 MARCH - THE POWER OF STORY

Children learn the deep truths of life and love through listening to stories with happy endings. The stories we enjoy as adults are often more complex and nuanced, and it can do our hearts good to return to the simple bedrock truths of love dispelling hate, goodness overcoming evil. This week, make time to dig out a book or film you loved as a child. Enjoy the story afresh and listen for God's word to you in it.

TUESDAY 22 MARCH - LISTENING THROUGH EMPATHY

We can see the fingerprints of loving goodness in another person's story, even when we're struggling to find them in our own. Read or listen to someone's testimony today – preferably someone who's still alive – then pray for them. As you immerse yourself in their story and bring them to God in prayer, what truths do you hear?

WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH - OWNING OUR BIASES

Invite a friend to write a list of about 30 words they associate with God – not thinking too hard about it. Do the same yourself, then get together to compare the lists. What do you notice about the two lists? What are the differences? Have they used words you wouldn't normally use about God?



THURSDAY 24 MARCH - NO CONDEMNATION

Read John 8:1-11, the story of what happens when a couple is caught committing adultery. Read it slowly once; then read it again, stopping when the Holy Spirit brings something to your attention. What is God saying to you through this story today?

E FRIDAY 25 MARCH - UNCHANGING GOODNESS

Are you trying to listen to God for a decision you've got to make? We can get so focused on getting things right or wrong that we can end up believing that God will be less pleased with us, less loving, less kind or less present with us if we make the 'wrong' decision. Spend time in prayer today, dwelling on the truth that God is endlessly loving and faithful, and has promised never to leave you or forsake you.

E SATURDAY 26 MARCH – THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FUN

Have you ever heard God speak to you when you weren't expecting it at all? If you want to hear God, sometimes the best thing to do is to stop listening so hard and devote your energies to having fun.

SUNDAY 27 MARCH – TESTIMONY TIME PLUS

Sharing testimony is a regular part of many Salvation Army meetings, but have you ever thought of it as a time to listen to God? During your meeting today, invite people to share testimonies of God's goodness in their lives; then add a short time of prayer at the end, inviting people to share what they think God was saying to the corps through those stories. You could ask people to speak the words or phrases out loud, or you could get people to write them down and post them up around the room.

WEEK 5 KNOW YOURSELF

Listening to God doesn't mean becoming a robot. We don't need to be able to turn off our personality, our feelings or our desires. In fact, God often speaks through those very things. Developing the habit of listening means developing the habit of paying attention to what's going on inside us.

MONDAY 28 MARCH - CONSOLATIONS AND DESOLATIONS

Ignatius of Loyola taught the members of his monastic order to recognise their consolations – the things which made them feel

peaceful – and their desolations – the things which made them feel unsettled.

Practise becoming aware of your consolations and desolations this week. Don't try to change how you feel – just notice what's going on in you.

TUESDAY 29 MARCH - GUIDED FROM WITHIN

'I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me' (Psalm 16:7 *ESV*).

The psalmist seems in no doubt that his heart, the seat of his strongest desires and deepest feelings, can be a trustworthy instructor. How do you feel about that? Do you trust your heart to help you discern God's will?

WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH - TRUTH FROM WITHIN

'But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom' (Psalm 51:6 *CEV*). It seems that honesty and wisdom are intrinsically linked. Far from wanting us to ignore or shut away our feelings, God invites us to acknowledge them and bring them into the conversation. Take some time in silence and stillness today, lifting to God what is going on deep inside, knowing you are loved and cherished.

THURSDAY 31 MARCH - CELEBRATE YOUR TALENTS

The one who made us knows how to communicate with us in ways that are perfectly fitted to who we are. If we suppress our personality or try to be more like someone else, there's a good chance we'll never hear what God wants to say to us. Do something today that is really 'you'. Use your talents and do something you love. Listen out for God's voice in the joy of those moments.

APRIL

E FRIDAY 1 APRIL - RESONANCE OR RESISTANCE

Listening to God gets more complicated when we're feeling several different things at once. It's as though there's an argumentative committee inside, all shouting their different opinions. Instead of trying to shut them all up, give each voice a chance to speak, and you may find it easier to discern God's voice in it all.

If you enjoy drawing, you might even like to draw your committee and write out what each one is feeling.



SATURDAY 2 APRIL - THE PRAYER OF SURRENDER

Lord, I thank you for who you made me to be. I thank you that you speak to me through my instincts, my feelings and my talents. Yet I don't want any of those things to get in the way of me following you. Show me where my own desires are drawing me away from you. Show me what I need to lay down, to step more fully into your design for my life. Lord, not my will but yours be done, through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

SUNDAY 3 APRIL - JIGSAW PIECES

When we listen to God together as a Christian community, every person matters. We can only fully know the word of God to us when every voice is heard. Give everyone a piece of a jigsaw puzzle and ask them to write a word or draw a picture on the back of it ... something they think is important for the church to remember. Then assemble the jigsaw and flip it over so that you no longer see the jigsaw picture but the words/pictures on the back. Leave it somewhere where everyone can see it.

WEEK 6 - LISTENING TO GOD TOGETHER

Although Jesus spent many hours alone in prayer, some of the most important communications between him and his Father happened in very public settings. On two occasions, the heavens opened and God spoke to him in an audible voice – once while he was surrounded by crowds and once while he was with his three best friends. Those who cultivate a listening habit are open to listening with others.

MONDAY 4 APRIL - GOD CONVERSATIONS

At its simplest, listening with others is talking to our family or friends about the things we've been hearing God say, or asking them to pray with us when we've got an important decision to make and we need to hear God's word on it. Make time this week for some 'God conversation' with someone you're close to.

TUESDAY 5 APRIL - LISTENING COUNCIL

If you need to hear God's voice in relation to a particular decision you need to make, gather a 'council' of trusted voices around you. Explain the situation to two or three of them and ask them to listen to God. Ask two or three others to listen to God without knowing the situation. Then invite them all to feed back to you, committing to hear and welcome every voice.

WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL - LISTENING FOR OTHERS

Do you know someone who particularly needs to hear God's voice at the moment? Pray for them today and ask God to point you to a Bible verse that will encourage them.

THURSDAY 7 APRIL - DROPPING OUR AGENDAS

Listening to God together becomes very difficult when everyone holds tight to their own agenda. It's important to be honest about how we feel, but then to let go of our own fixed view of how things should move forward. You can't make anyone else drop their agenda, but you can practise doing it yourself. Next time you notice a strong opinion in yourself about how something should be done, stop for a moment and open your heart and mind, reaffirming your trust in God and your desire to listen.

FRIDAY 8 APRIL - TELLING OUR STORY

When we're praying together to discern the right way forward, it can be useful to start with thankfulness, looking back over the journey we've travelled and marking the moments when we've heard God in the past. If you're part of a group who are listening to God for future plans, take time to remember the journey so far and give thanks.

SATURDAY 9 APRIL - POWER DYNAMICS

Wherever there's a bunch of human beings in community, there will be power dynamics; some will be more powerful than others. As we listen to God together, we need to be mindful of where the power lies, so we can be sure that no one's voice is drowned out. Whatever you're doing today, practise the art of listening out for the quietest voice or the least powerful person in a room and help them to be heard.

SUNDAY 10 APRIL - LAYING DOWN OUR PRIDE

The Palm Sunday story tells of how the people laid down their coats for the donkey to walk over as it carried Jesus into Jerusalem. Coats were a sign of status and wealth, probably one of the most expensive items someone would have owned at that time, and laying them down under a young, excitable donkey was a risky business. But they did it for Jesus. During worship today, could you invite people to lay something down on the floor as a sign of surrender and trust?



WEEK 7 LISTENING THROUGH PAIN

'We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.' (CS Lewis, The Problem of Pain)

How often have we thought it would be easier to hear God if we weren't in pain? How often have we longed for the tough times to pass because then we'd be able to sense God's nearness and hear God's voice? Yet pain can be a rich place of hearing, if only we cultivate those habits of listening. The stories of Holy Week are precious gifts to help us learn how to be attentive to the presence and activity of God, no matter what is going on in and around us.

B MONDAY 11 APRIL - REMEMBERING WITH GRATITUDE

We find courage and hope for the present and the future when we remember the past. Think of a time when you were in pain and reflect on what you've learnt about God from that experience. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you something new about that experience – something you've never thought of before.

TUESDAY 12 APRIL - THE PAIN OF INJUSTICE

When Jesus acted in anger, turning over the tables in the Temple courts, there must have been much pain inside him – the pain of seeing people exploited and his Father's house misused. Does it ever occur to you that the pain you feel is God drawing your attention to injustice? As you notice your pain and anger today, ask God to help you see the injustice you're reacting to, and spend time praying for justice to be done.

WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL - OWNING OUR DISAPPOINTMENTS

The Bible assures us that God has our best interests at heart. The trouble is, that doesn't stop us being disappointed ... by life, by others and even by God. Arrange some time with a friend this week, if you can, and talk honestly about the disappointments which still cause you pain, then ask them to do the same. As you talk and listen, open your heart to hear something new from God.

THURSDAY 14 APRIL - COMFORT AND COMPANY

In Holy Week we remember the story of a woman in pain who poured expensive perfume over Jesus' feet. Despite his own growing sorrow

and heaviness, Jesus welcomed her, on his way to his death. If there's love, then two people in pain can be good company for one another. Is there someone you know who could use a friendly face or a kind word today? Even if you're in pain, could you keep them company for a while?

E FRIDAY 15 APRIL - GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus, you suffered pain beyond my imagining. You, who had heard your Father's voice so clearly, were suddenly smothered in darkness and silence. You, who had prayed for hours in perfect communion with your Father, were suddenly alone and cut off. Jesus, when I simply can't hear, hold me tight and carry me through. Jesus, when I feel utterly unheard, wrap me up in your love and heal my soul.

SATURDAY 16 APRIL - DOING A DIFFICULT THING

It is a frustrating truth that we tend to learn more through struggle than through comfort. Find a task to do today which you don't find easy. Notice what God is showing you as you tackle it. When you've finished, take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned and on how that wisdom might be applied in other areas of your life at the moment.

SUNDAY 17 APRIL - EASTER TIDINGS

Jesus left the job of telling the world about his resurrection to his disciples. For two thousand years, the Easter tidings have kept rolling from generation to generation. Could you make time in worship today (or afterwards over coffee) to encourage everyone to tell one other person about something good God has done for them. We always hear God more when we get into the habit of telling the good news of Jesus.

EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL FOCUS

& JO MOODY (ASSOCIATE OFFICER, PENGE CORPS)

E MONDAY 18 APRIL - PSALM 24:1

The Resurrection we have just celebrated reminds us that Jesus lived, died and rose again so that not just individuals but the whole earth can be renewed. Today, lift your praises to God our loving creator; give thanks that everyone and everything belongs to, and is loved and sustained by, God. Rejoice that God will bring everything to full wholeness through Jesus our Lord.



E TUESDAY 19 APRIL

The Lord is Lord of all the vast universe, but also the Lord of every particular and specific part of it. Today, get outside in nature (or look through a window) and choose something specific to thank God for. You could try smelling a flower, or standing barefoot on the ground, or watching the clouds in the sky, or listening to the birds. Spend a minute or two, just appreciating it in silence and stillness, allowing God to show you his presence.

E WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL - GENESIS 1:9

Lord God, we thank you for your provision of the water we need, for our seas and rivers and the nourishment they give. We pray for all those who depend on them for a living and for those who seek to protect and conserve these precious environments. We pray for those affected by storms and floods; please rescue, protect, comfort and strengthen them. We pray for those without access to clean water and those working to help, so that all can benefit from your blessing, and the Earth can heal.

E THURSDAY 21 APRIL - GENESIS 1:11

Today, why not have your prayer time at breakfast. Savour your food with thanksgiving that God has provided, and with gratefulness for those who work hard so that we have food to eat. Pray for the farmers who need fairer wages and struggle because of climate change. Pray for those making hard decisions about agriculture and trade; guide them to make decisions that will bless the poorest of people so that all can benefit from the abundance God gives to the Earth.

E FRIDAY 22 APRIL - EARTH DAY - GENESIS 1:28 (THE VOICE)

Lord, creator of all living things, guide our daily actions and thoughts so we become better stewards of the Earth. Guide us to act responsibly, to care for the Earth you gave us and to make wise choices in our everyday living. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY 23 APRIL

Our loving Lord, may we learn to live within our means, by reducing our waste and reusing and recycling all that we can. May we live in harmony with the Earth and work to leave this world in a state that future generations will be able to enjoy, ensuring that it is filled with resources and life and kept healthy and clean. Guide us, Lord, and show us what we personally and as a wider Church can do. Amen.

E SUNDAY 24 APRIL - GENESIS 2:3

Dear Lord Jesus, you lived a holy life with a grace-filled rhythm of action and rest. Show me how to live a healthy and balanced life, with times of Sabbath rest and rejoicing which will re-energise me for the work you have given me to do. We pray for peace for those people and places that are without rest just now, and we pray that you, Lord, who promised us the renewal of all creation, will bring rest and peace to the whole Earth. Amen.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND FOCUS

A CAPTAIN TIM LENNOX (CORPS OFFICER, DUBLIN CITY)

E MONDAY 25 APRIL - CORPS

There are two corps in Ireland – Dublin City and Dublin South. Dublin City is a multicultural corps in the heart of the city that runs a café. Dublin South has many community groups, particularly amongst families. Pray that both would grow and that the Lord would help both corps in adapting to life in the new normal.

TUESDAY 26 APRIL - FRESH EXPRESSIONS

A fresh expression of church is being nurtured in Limerick. There are also fresh expression opportunities in other places such as Wexford, Galway and Tralee. Pray that there would be a great vision to reach the nation. Pray also for the Lord to provide the people and resources to make the vision a reality.

WEDNESDAY 27 APRIL - LIFEHOUSES

There are two Lifehouses (Granby Centre and York House) and a night shelter (Coleraine Street) in Dublin. Over 200 beds are used each night. Pray that many of the service users would be supported into independent living. Pray that our amazing staff would have strength, wisdom and grace every day. Pray that specifically for the ministry of the chaplain, Major Eleanor Haddick, in the centres.

THURSDAY 28 APRIL - FAMILIES

Ireland is experiencing rising levels of homelessness amongst families. The Army now runs three family hubs in Dublin (Clonard Road, Houben House and Greencastle Parade). Each hub homes between 30 to 90 families. Pray that the Government and communities would find solutions to end the crisis. Pray for the families and staff within our centres. Pray for the chaplains, Majors Gordon and Margaret Fozzard.



FRIDAY 29 APRIL - THE IRISH

Ireland is a beautiful country full of warm and welcoming people. Pray that the Army would have a special attentiveness to the history and culture of this land. Pray that all our expressions of church would be shaped by this Irish-ness. Pray that in these days we would see many Irish come to faith in Jesus.

SATURDAY 30 APRIL - CONNECTION

It is estimated that there are over 300 Salvationists living throughout Ireland. They are often isolated and unaffiliated to a local corps, so we want to connect with and form a broader fellowship. Pray that we would be able to connect with and support Salvationists living throughout the country. Pray that the Army would discern creative ways to cultivate fellowship.



E SUNDAY 1 MAY - LEADERSHIP

The work in Ireland is led by our Divisional Leaders, Colonels Neil and Chris Webb, and a board of directors. Pray for wisdom, discernment and boldness for both our Divisional Leaders and the board as they provide leadership.

CANDIDATES FOCUS

A MAJOR CHRISTINE KINGSCOTT (ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT)

Sunday 8 May is Candidates Sunday. During this coming week we will use selected verses of Scripture along with the verses of Song 660 (*SASB*) to reflect on our own personal response when called to follow Christ.

B MONDAY 2 MAY

'The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had' (Philippians 2:5 *GNB*).

May the mind of Christ my Saviour Live in me from day to day, By his love and power controlling All I do and say.

TUESDAY 3 MAY

'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light to my path' (Psalm 119:105).

May the word of God dwell richly In my heart from hour to hour, So that all may see I triumph Only through his power.

E WEDNESDAY 4 MAY

'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace' (Colossians 3:15).

May the peace of God my Father Rule my life in everything, That I may calm and comfort Sick and sorrowing.

E THURSDAY 5 MAY

'And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity' (Colossians 3:14).

May the love of Jesus fill me, As the waters fill the sea; Him exalting, self abasing, This is victory.

FRIDAY 6 MAY

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin which so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the face marked out for us' (Hebrews 12:1).

May I run the race before me, Strong and brave to face the foe, Looking only unto Jesus As I onward go.

SATURDAY 7 MAY

'One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple' (Psalm 27:4).

May his beauty rest upon me As I seek the lost to win, And may they forget the channel, Seeing only him.



SUNDAY 8 MAY

'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last' (John 15:16).

Today is Candidates Sunday. I ask you to spend a few moments considering God's calling and what that means for you personally. The Salvation Army needs passionate, Spirit-filled people to become local leaders. Could God be calling you to full-time ministry as an officer or territorial envoy within The Salvation Army, or to serve him locally? If you would like to speak to someone about God's call, contact your corps officer, DHQ or the Candidates Unit.

FOCUS ON ST PATRICK'S PRAYER

A MAJOR JO JUSTICE (DIVISIONAL MISSION ENABLER)

B MONDAY 9 MAY

During the first disorientating lockdown of the pandemic I set myself the challenge of learning St Patrick's prayer. Repeating it as I walked helped me to be present to God in a new way. Let's begin this week clothing ourselves with the Creator:

I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity by invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three.

E TUESDAY 10 MAY

'Christ be with me, Christ within me'

Could it be that God also clothes himself in us, so that we may be 'with' others in the same way he is 'with' us? Who will I be shoulderto-shoulder with today? Who can I give my full attention? Pray for opportunities to be alongside in the same way that Jesus is with us.

E WEDNESDAY 11 MAY

'Christ behind me, Christ before me'

In his recent book Let us Dream – the path to a better future, Pope Francis speaks of the fundamental changes we need to make to society to address poverty and the wellbeing of all. 'This is a moment to dream big ... God asks us to dare to create something new.' Ask what Kingdom dreams does God want us to dream.

E THURSDAY 12 MAY

'Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me'

Biblical restoration is more than a patch-up job. It's about the wholeness of individuals, healing for relationships, even the renewal of all creation. Restoration is also about justice and inclusion for the marginalised. Pray for the Church's work with those who don't feel they are part of the whole.

FRIDAY 13 MAY

'Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger'

Psalm 139 reminds us there is no place and no situation where God is unable to show the way – 'even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast' (v10). Pray for those who feel afraid or in chaos today, that they will be quieted and reassured by God's abiding presence.

SATURDAY 14 MAY

'Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger'

Called to clothe ourselves in Christ, but also to see him in the face of others, especially the despised and rejected, pray that we will recognise Jesus in others; and remember we are not the answer to their prayers – they are the answer to ours.

SUNDAY 15 MAY

'The Lord alone is our radiant hope and we trust in him with all our hearts. His wraparound presence will strengthen us' (Psalm 33:20 *TPT*).

St Patrick's prayer has reminded us both that we are in Christ and he in us; with Christ, and he with us in others. Pray that his 'wraparound presence' will strengthen his people as they worship and rest today.

FOCUS ON THE LIGHT

A MAJOR JILL MILLER (PRAYER NETWORK)

B MONDAY 16 MAY

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8:12).



Lord Jesus, I bow in awe before you, and as I seek your presence with me and within me, I see brightness and radiance, for you are light. Wash away any darkness in my heart and mind with your powerful light and shine on me today.

TUESDAY 17 MAY

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (John 1:5).

Father God, thank you for Jesus who removes the darkness of sin from our lives when we seek his salvation. We pray for places in the world that are ruled by darkness and evil, believing in the power of your light at work in all who call you Lord.

E WEDNESDAY 18 MAY

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden' (Matthew 5:14).

Jesus Christ, light of the world, you have declared that as your follower I am a light in the world. Give me boldness every day to shine out as a Christian disciple. Fill me with your love for the world so that I may see others as you see them.

E THURSDAY 19 MAY

'Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven' (Matthew 5:15-16).

Forgive me, Lord, when I am tempted to hide my light, my faith, my love for you. I want everyone to know you are Lord of my life and I am your precious child. May my life glorify you, every day.

FRIDAY 20 MAY

'God is light; in him there is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5).

Father God, we stand firm in the knowledge that you are everywhere, and where you are there is goodness and holiness and truth and purity. We praise you for shining out your grace and love and forgiveness on us.

E SATURDAY 21 MAY

'The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?' (Psalm 27:1).

Father God, you know the fears that come into our minds and destroy our peace. At such times we thank you for the reminder that we have nothing to fear when we call on your liberating light and salvation to shatter those dark thoughts.

SUNDAY 22 MAY

'The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp' (Revelation 21:23).

Heaven is a place filled with the brightness of the glory of God and the shining presence of Jesus. We give thanks for this wonderful inheritance for all who believe. As we live on earth, we pray for light to guide us, transform us and empower us.

ASCENSION FOCUS

A MAJOR SIMON CLAMPTON (OVERSEAS SERVICES UNIT)

$\textcircled{\sc b}$ setting the scene

Luke gives us most of the details on Jesus' Ascension to heaven (Luke 24:45-53 and Acts 1:1-12), while there is also a shorter account in Mark (Mark 16:15-20). Why not revisit those verses first in preparation for our focus this week.

E MONDAY 23 MAY (ISAIAH 40:31)

Lord Jesus, before you ascended you told your followers to wait for the Holy Spirit who would come in power. In our lives today, we too need to learn to be still and wait – indeed, to allow your Spirit to minister to us, as 'those who hope in (wait for) the Lord shall renew their strength' (Isaiah 40:31). Amen.

TUESDAY 24 MAY (MATTHEW 7:7)

Lord, it is no surprise that you ascended from a mount. Throughout history, many people have perceived you close to them on hills and mountains, where there seems to be a closeness between heaven and earth, a thin place. In our lives too, help us to seek and to find our thin places with you. Amen.

E WEDNESDAY 25 MAY (PSALM 24:3-4)

Lord, we are told that those with clean hands and a pure heart may ascend your holy hill. Thank you for saving us and keeping us saved



through your Spirit. May we be worthy of your name as Christians today, and found faithful when we meet you on your holy hill in eternity. Amen.

THURSDAY 26 MAY (JOHN 14:6) - ASCENSION DAY

Thank you, Jesus, for coming from Heaven to earth to save us, and to show us the way to Heaven is through you as 'the way and the truth and the life'. By your Spirit, direct us along our life path on earth that will lead us to you in Heaven. Amen.

FRIDAY 27 MAY (MATTHEW 28:20)

Lord, although we cannot physically see you, you are not 'out of sight, out of mind' as your Spirit is with us every day. As Jesus said, 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28:20). Reassure us today that you are close by and not far away. Amen.

SATURDAY 28 MAY (MATTHEW 24:36)

Lord, we do not know the day or the hour when you will return, but at that time may we be prepared to meet you. Until then, help us to hold firm to the promise that if we are ready, then we will be with you for ever in your presence in eternity. Amen.

SUNDAY 29 MAY

To conclude our reflections on the Ascension of Jesus, let's join in praise with the words of Walter Chalmers Smith (*SASB* 37):

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, In light inaccessible hid from our eyes, Most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise. Amen.

FOCUS ON THOSE WHO HELP OTHERS

A WENDY WASELS (VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER)

$\textcircled{\sc b}$ setting the scene

The first week of June each year is Volunteers Week. It is a time to focus on those who tirelessly give of their time and talents to help those who depend on us. It is a time of celebration and an opportunity to remind them that we are deeply grateful for their service.

E MONDAY 30 MAY

Father, we thank you for the gifts of our volunteers and ask that they can use them well in their service to others. We pray that you continue to give them the strength and energy to cope with the challenges that are presented to them. Everything they do will bring glory to God through Jesus. Amen.

TUESDAY 31 MAY

Father, we thank you for the commitment of our volunteers who get involved with running our vital services, from helping those experiencing homelessness, assisting in a charity shop, supporting service users, to making coffee in a community café. May they not weary of doing good. Amen.

JUNE

B WEDNESDAY 1 JUNE - WWW.VOLUNTEERSWEEK.ORG

Father, as we start our celebrations for Volunteers' Week, we thank you for the millions of people in the world who contribute to the lives of so many through volunteering. Please bless them all and give them the encouragement to carry on as the pandemic eases. Amen.

E THURSDAY 2 JUNE

Father, as we celebrate the achievements of our volunteers this week, let us also give thanks for those who manage, support and work alongside them in order that they can give of their best. May those that refresh others also be refreshed. Amen.

LOOKING FORWARD FOCUS

AMAJOR DAVID M EVANS (TERRITORIAL ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH OFFICER)

SETTING THE SCENE

Acts 2:42-47 tells of the Holy Spirit giving power – to perform miracles, to lead people to faith and salvation in Christ, to operate in the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. The disciples' devotion to prayer, fellowship and serving their communities had a result. Imagine what can happen if we did the same!



FRIDAY 3 JUNE - MAJOR DAVID M EVANS

Dear Heavenly Father, show us as believers how to be open to the freedom your Holy Spirit provides. As people of faith help us to look forward, accepting your power and the gifts and fruit of your Spirit, to take every opportunity to share your good news to all those around us and to our needy world. Amen.

E SATURDAY 4 JUNE - REV PHILIP BROOKS, NATIONAL ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH OFFICER, URC (ENGLAND AND WALES)

God of new beginnings, we look back to the time of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in wind and flame, giving birth to the first Church. In our prayers we look forward to a time when we can truly live out the example of those first disciples, sharing all they had and having the goodwill of all people. Amen.

SUNDAY 5 JUNE - MAJOR DAVID M EVANS

Lord, on this Pentecost day along with our brothers and sisters from the worldwide body of Christ, we simply ask that your Holy Spirit touches your Church once again. As we face unknown futures, looking forward we simply plead, 'Move, Holy Spirit, move in our lives. Move, Holy Spirit, to make us (TOGETHER) like Christ.' Amen.

E MONDAY 6 JUNE - REV DR JOHN MCPAKE, NATIONAL ECUMENICAL OFFICER, CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Living God And Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Pour out your Spirit upon us And create your people anew. May your Spirit come to counsel and direct us, And grant to us wisdom in all we face. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer. Amen.

TUESDAY 7 JUNE - PASTOR (DR) MARCUS CHILAKA, NATIONAL PASTOR FOR ECUMENISM REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD (RCCG), UK

Our heavenly Father, we pray that your Church of all expressions will work together in the power of the Holy Spirit to advance Kingdom life and principles. Help us find new strength for service to you and our communities. May we continue to look forward with steadfast hope to a brighter tomorrow and in readiness for your second coming. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 8 JUNE - FR JAN NOWOKNIC, CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Come Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit of wisdom and joy! Protect me with the mantle of your care and teach me to trust in your love and gentleness.

Give me the grace to live for today and to entrust the future to your providence.

Come, Holy Spirit, come! Amen.

THURSDAY 9 JUNE - MAJOR SAMUEL EDGAR, TERRITORIAL ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH SUPPORT OFFICER

Dear Lord, we praise you for the Holy Spirit who constantly does new things. As we look forward in faith, please take my hands to extend your love and goodness, take my feet to guide me where you want me to go, and take my salvation story to proclaim your will for the world. Help me to trust and move forward. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER FOCUS

A MAJOR PAULINE MILNER (PRAYER NETWORK)

The opening verses of Luke 11 record that after Jesus had been praying, one of his disciples asked him, 'Lord, teach us to pray ...' It's worth noting that the disciples had been with Jesus at this time for around two years. They had front row seats when he taught and preached. They witnessed his miracles. Yet, interestingly, in so far as Scripture tells us, they didn't ask him, 'Lord, teach us to preach,' or 'Lord, show us how to minister' or 'Lord, show us how to do mission.' They asked, 'Lord, teach us to pray ...'Jesus responded with what we commonly call 'The Lord's Prayer', though it might be better called the 'Disciples Prayer' since it serves as a model or template for us still today.

FRIDAY 10 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:9 (*TPT*): JESUS SAID ... 'PRAY LIKE THIS:'

Our beloved Father, dwelling in the heavenly realms, may the glory of your name be the centre on which our lives turn. Manifest your



Kingdom realm and cause your every purpose to be fulfilled on earth, just as it is in Heaven. We acknowledge you as provider of all we need each day. Forgive us the wrongs we have done as we ourselves release forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Rescue us every time we face tribulation and set us free from evil. For you are the King who rules with power and glory forever. Amen.

E SATURDAY 11 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:9 - GOD'S PATERNITY: 'OUR FATHER ...'

When we come to God in prayer, Jesus shows us we can speak to him intimately as his children (John 1:12) and he our Father.

Living and loving God, today we pause to marvel at your love and compassion in giving us Jesus, that we may call you - who are Almighty, Sovereign, Creator of all things and King of Glory - 'Abba Father'. Help us to grasp this amazing blessing and to live confidently as your beloved children. Amen.

E SUNDAY 12 JUNE – MATTHEW 6:9 : 'HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME'

When we pray 'Hallowed be your name', we are declaring that our God is holy, consecrated, sacred and to be revered. Here Jesus teaches us to pray that God may be God to us. It is also a missional prayer; the essence of all evangelism is people everywhere allowing God to be God in their lives.

Heavenly Father, we revere and honour your holy name. Be God in every aspect of our lives and reveal yourself more and more to us as we pray. Today I pray for ... (name those you are praying for). Please break in and be God in their lives. Amen.

MONDAY 13 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:10 - GOD'S PROGRAMME AND PURPOSE

When we pray, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done,' we look toward that time when the kingdom of this world will become the Kingdom of our God.

Father, we pray for our world and for an end to all that frustrates the fulfilment of your purpose. We think of those in countries racked by conflict, famine, disease and poverty; of those who face repression and discrimination and persecution. Help us to usher in your Kingdom now, as we commit to build a more just and loving world. Amen.

TUESDAY 14 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:11 - GOD'S PROVISION: 'GIVE US TODAY ...'

When Jesus included the words 'Give us this day our daily bread', he showed us that God is as concerned with our physical wellbeing as he is with our spiritual wellbeing. Take a moment to thank God for his provision in your life and ask him for the things you need today.

Father, we thank you as you have given us far in excess of our daily meal and what we simply need to live. Help us to be thankful and generous in sharing with others all that you have given to us. Amen.

E WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE - MATTHEW 6: 12: 'FORGIVE US OUR SINS..'

Ponder 1 John 1:9 and make your own confession.

Father, time and again we experience failure in our lives, in our choices, in our attitudes, and in our relationships. We thank you for being so ready to forgive us whenever we turn to you and honestly acknowledge our sinfulness. We thank you that no matter who we are or what we have done or failed to do, in you we can know the joy of forgiveness and beginning again. Amen.

THURSDAY 16 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:12: '...AS WE ALSO FORGIVE ...'

Read the sober warning given in Matthew 6:15.

Gracious Father, help us to be people who forgive those who hurt or wrong us quickly and completely, without harbouring grudges or bitterness. In so doing, may we know your peace and seek to live in peace with others, demonstrating the reality of the grace and love of Jesus in all that we say and do. Amen.

➡ FRIDAY 17 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:13 - GOD'S PROTECTION: 'LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION'

Jesus reminds us that we are in a spiritual battle between good and evil; there is no neutral ground. Here we acknowledge that alone we are no match for such powers, but we can rely fully on God to protect us.

Father, we thank you for your word that tells us Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are. Thank you that you do not leave us without guidance to resist and overcome the temptations that come upon us. Strengthen our faith and deepen our understanding and application of your word in our lives. Amen.

E SATURDAY 18 JUNE - MATTHEW 6:13: 'AND DELIVER US FROM EVIL'

To pray this prayer is to recognise our own weakness, and the danger of sin, at the same time declaring we have a God who can save us.

Father, thank you for revealing that the evil one is powerful and active in this world, and he is opposed to your good creation and perfect will. Thank you that the victory of Jesus on the cross is not just more powerful, it is all powerful! Today we pray for the world, we bind every force of evil and call for the light and goodness of Jesus to shine into the darkest places. Amen.

SUNDAY 19 JUNE - 'YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER'

Read 1 Chronicles 29:11

The Lord's Prayer as we commonly recite it concludes with a trumpet blast of praise. These words do not appear in the prayer as Jesus taught it, though such doxologies appear in other biblical texts.

Lord Jesus, thank you that real power and glory is found in obedience, forgiveness, humility, grace, justice and love. In praying these words today, we declare and pledge our allegiance to the Kingdom of God and dedicate our lives to making it a reality here on earth. Amen.

FOCUS ON PEACE

A HANNAH KINGSTON (RESOURCE HUB)

E MONDAY 20 JUNE

Lord, when we are busy and our minds are racing, help us to find ways to stop, slow down and focus our thoughts on you. May we bring you into every element of our daily lives, finding reassurance from the deep peace we experience within our hearts by spending time in your presence. Amen.

TUESDAY 21 JUNE

'And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:7).

Lord, we thank you that in difficult situations, when facing uncertainty and worry, the peace we experience through you exceeds anything we can imagine or understand. Help us to know this truth and turn to you in all situations. Amen.

E WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE

Lord, we thank you that your perfect gift of creation can help us to encounter moments of peace in our daily lives. May we take time to stop and experience your peace through the beauty of the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the rivers, the sea, the fields, the flowers and all other examples of your creation in front of us today. Amen.

THURSDAY 23 JUNE

'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace' (Numbers 6:24-26).

Repeat these verses throughout the day as a prayer for yourself, for your family, for your neighbours, for your friends and for our world.

FRIDAY 24 JUNE

Prince of peace, forgive us for the times when we have put our trust and hope in things other than you. May we find rest and peace in knowing that you have a plan for our lives and comfort in the knowledge that you have sent your angels to watch over us. Amen.

JEHOVAH GOD FOCUS

A MAJOR CHRISTINE KINGSCOTT (ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT)

SETTING THE SCENE

God is referred to by several different names within the Bible. Often those names help to describe who God is, his character and the way in which he reveals himself to us. One of those names is Jehovah, which is the Hebrew word for Lord. Over the next few days we are going to look at how our Jehovah God cares for us.

E SATURDAY 25 JUNE - JEHOVAH

Today take some time to read Exodus 3:11-14. God appears to Moses out of the burning bush and tells him he is to return to Egypt, intercede with Pharaoh and lead the Israelite people to the place God has prepared for them. When Moses asks, 'Whom shall I say sent me?', God says, 'Say "I AM" has sent me.'

What is God asking you to do? Is he calling you to some specific ministry?



E SUNDAY 26 JUNE - JEHOVAH BORE

'Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom' (Isaiah 40: 28). The book of Genesis starts with the words, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1). Spend some time reflecting on these two verses of Scripture.

What do these verses say to you? What are the pictures in your mind? The tiny newborn baby? The ruggedness of the mountains, the mighty ocean, the rich green pastures or the amazing sunset? All are part of his creation. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to our Father God.

B MONDAY 27 JUNE - JEHOVAH JIREH

'So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided" (Genesis 22:14).

Take a few moments to read the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis chapter 22. God instructs Abraham to take his son Isaac to the region of Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord. When he reaches the place of sacrifice, Abraham prepares the altar as God instructed. Just as he is about to offer Isaac to God, God provides an alternate sacrifice of a ram.

Where have you seen God at work, and how has he provided for you?

🖻 TUESDAY 28 JUNE - JEHOVAH ROHI

'The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing' (Psalm 23:1).

Psalm 23 and John 10 contain beautiful descriptions of God as our Shepherd, Jehovah Rohi. In Old Testament times the shepherd lived, ate and slept alongside his sheep, guiding them to new pastures, protecting them from predators, making sure they were provided for. As you look back on your life, think about who the shepherds in your life have been and give thanks to God for the way they have nurtured and guided you in the past.

WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE – JEHOVAH SHALOM

'But the Lord said to him [Gideon], "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord is Peace' (Judges 6:23-24).

Lord, when my heart is overwhelmed by fear, help me to place my trust in you. Remind me of your words, 'Do not be afraid for I am with

you.' Remind me, just as you did Gideon, that in you I can find peace. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

E THURSDAY 30 JUNE - JEHOVAH SHAMMAH

'Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there' (Psalm 139:7-8).

God is omnipresent, he is everywhere. He is with us in the difficult experiences, the sad times, and he also rejoices with us in the good times.

Today as you pray, thank God for his omnipresence, asking the Holy Spirit to help you always be aware of his presence, especially in the dark and difficult times.



Notes



'One Thing' is a 3 season DVD series of teaching on prayer produced by the SA Prayer Network. It is an excellent resource for individual, small group and whole church use.

This series makes available, on a much wider scale, teaching that would previously only have been accessible to those able to attend a SA Prayer School Teaching series of events over a period of weeks.

Season 1: 'One Thing for us - bringing personal prayer to life', explores over 6 episodes how we can develop an effective personal prayer life.

Season 2: One Thing for the Church - growing prayer together', explores some of the most pressing questions asked about developing prayer in the local corps / church setting. Corps members and leaders talk about how they have 'grown' prayer in their worshipping community.

Season 3: 'One Thing for the World - moving out in prayer', explores the relationship between prayer and mission. Most teaching sessions took place at our 'One Thing Prayer and Mission Conference', we also hear stories from people around the country about how prayer is transforming their neighbourhoods.

Available on DVD for £12.95 from SP & S, including workbook to help you use/ lead the course. Also available free online! Visit our web page for links to the sessions, which can be downloaded along with leaders notes in pdf format at www.salvationarmy.org.uk/one-thing

CALLING CONNECTING Releasing DYNAMIC KINGDOM-BUILDING PRAYER

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