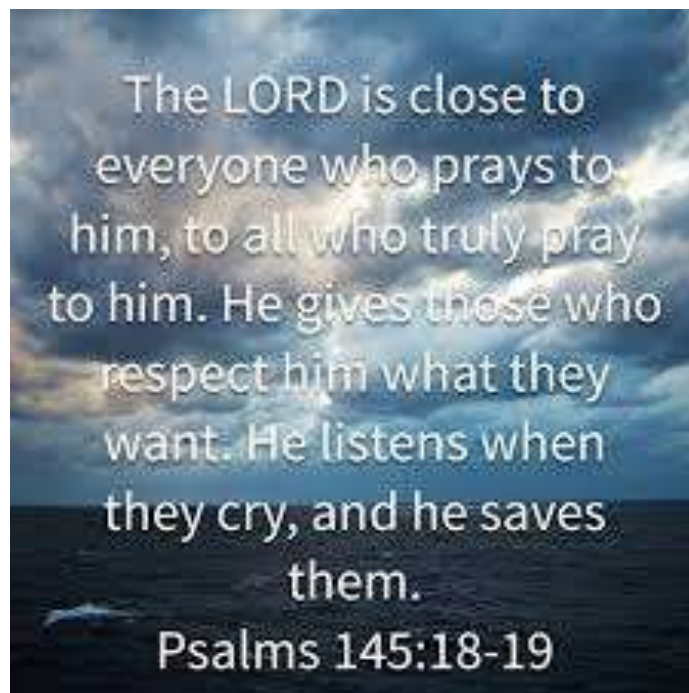




Reflections & Prayers for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

6th September 2020



Today we are thinking about new beginnings. In particular, about the new school year. All of us have been through a major time of change and challenge this year. Now, a long-awaited day has arrived, when schools are going to open again. Perhaps your child or grandchild is starting school or nursery for the first time, or moving into a new year group or starting secondary school. Perhaps you know a teacher who is preparing to return to school. We may be a long way off from our own school days, but it is important that the whole church community prays for and supports those who are returning to school – or, indeed, returning to office or other place of employment. Life has changed, and new beginnings can be daunting. Rooting our life in prayer is one way to face the challenges of a new beginning.

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Reading for this Sunday

Daniel 6: 1 – 10

Darius thought it would be a good idea to choose 120 governors. They would rule through all of his kingdom. And he chose three men as supervisors over those 120 governors. Daniel was one of these three supervisors. The king set up these men so that he would not be cheated. Daniel showed that he could do the work better than the other supervisors and the governors. Because of this, the king planned to put Daniel in charge of the whole kingdom. So the other supervisors and the governors tried to find reasons to accuse Daniel. But he went on doing the business of the government. And they could not find anything wrong with him. So they could not accuse him of doing anything wrong. Daniel was trustworthy. He was not lazy and did not cheat the king. Finally these men said, "We will never find any reason to accuse Daniel. But we must find something to complain about. It will have to be about the law of his God." So the supervisors and the governors went as a group to the king. They said: "King Darius, live forever! The supervisors, assistant governors, governors, the people who advise you and the captains of the soldiers have all agreed on something. We think the king should make this law that everyone would have to obey: No one should pray to any god or man except to you, our king. This should be done for the next 30 days. Anyone who doesn't obey will be thrown into the lions' den. Now, our king, make the law. Write it

down so it cannot be changed. The laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be cancelled.” So King Darius made the law and had it written. When Daniel heard that the new law had been written, he went to his house. He went to his upstairs room. The windows of that room opened toward



Jerusalem. Three times each day Daniel got down on his knees and prayed. He prayed and thanked God, just as he always had done.

Reflection from Lauryn Awbrey

When we hear the name **Daniel**, who do you imagine? Maybe you are called Daniel, or you know someone who is! Today we are thinking about Daniel in the Bible. Daniel led an interesting - and challenging - life! In today's reading from chapter 6, Daniel is about to start a new venture, because there is a new king, King Darius, on the throne.

King Darius knew that he couldn't be everywhere at once, because he ruled over a very large kingdom. So he chose reliable, responsible leaders to make sure people were keeping his rules. One of his chosen leaders was Daniel.

Daniel stood out from the crowd. He was trustworthy, he wasn't lazy, and he didn't cheat. Daniel loved and trusted God, and that shaped who he was. Daniel worked hard - not because he wanted to be rich or famous, but because he wanted his life to bring honour to God. And God gave Daniel success. He caused the king to give Daniel promotion. God loved Daniel, and Daniel loved God. Daniel allowed God to be in charge, and as a result, God

was the one who was shaping Daniel's life for him. Daniel trusted God, and talked to him, that is, he prayed to him every day.

Who was paying attention to the Bible story? How many times did Daniel pray?

Three times a day Daniel got down on his knees and prayed. He didn't just pray a quick prayer in the morning, or a brief thank you prayer at night. And because he prayed often, he became the kind of person God wanted him to be. His strength and trust were in God, not in himself. His focus wasn't on what great things *he* could do – but what great things *God* could do through him.

The king had made a new law that put people who prayed to God in danger. But did Daniel stop praying? Not at all! Did he pray to King Darius instead? Certainly not! When he heard about the new rule, he did as he usually did. He went to his room, knelt and prayed.

Taking everything to God in prayer was normal for Daniel, and he wasn't going to stop now. He thanked God as he usually did, *before* asking him for help.

We can learn a lot from Daniel. **Prayer shaped Daniel.** What about us? Do we pray regularly through the day, like Daniel did? Does prayer shape our character, like it did Daniel's?

You might remember that Daniel got into some big trouble because of his faithfulness to God and prayer. He got thrown in to a den of lions! Even then, surrounded by LIONS, Daniel did not run away from trouble; he did not panic. He continued to trust in God, to pray, and God protected him.

Remember that verse printed on page 1: ***The Lord is close to everyone who prays, to all who truly pray to him. He gives those who fear him what they want. He listens when they cry, and he saves them.*** Psalm 145:18-19.

We are living in new times, and slowly but surely beginning to find new ways of being. Some people are going back to school and back to work...

which is hopefully a little less scary than a lion's den! But we might be scared; we might be anxious or frightened. And that's okay. Remember... God goes with you. Whether you are going out or back out to school or work, or are continuing to find ways of coping with social distancing and isolating, you can tell God your worries and fears - and also your hopes - in prayer, and know that God listens to you, and is with you.

Prayers

Today we want to pray especially for our children, teachers, and local schools. It is a privilege for all of us to be able to support schools in prayer, particularly as we all know they have been through a difficult time. It is important that our children and parents and teachers know that they are held in prayer by the whole church - whether we are going to school now or haven't been inside a school for decades.

Gracious God, we pray for our nurseries and those who work in them. Please Lord, watch over our little children and keep them safe. Thank you that you love them. Help nursery staff in the amazing job they do, creating happy places where our children can be safe and cared for well. Please help the children to settle, make friends, and learn to love and help one another, despite the current challenges. Lord, hear our prayer.

Gracious God, thank you for our primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, and all those who work in them. We remember in prayer all the children in the world who have no school to go to. Help us to appreciate our teachers and our friends and what we have. Please encourage our school staff, who do such a brilliant job of running our schools. Help them to adjust to a new routine. Help all those who are starting school for the first time, or who are nervous about returning to school. Help them to settle quickly and know that you are with them. Be with those who are leaving home and starting at university. When we are worried like Daniel, remind us that we can turn to you and ask for help. Lord, hear our prayer.

Our heavenly Father, thank you that prayer shapes, prayer saves. Give us faith like Daniel, to trust you for every new day, no matter what challenges it brings.

We pray for guidance for those who have difficult decisions to make – in Government and at a local level. We ask you to bless our community and our role as a church within it. Finally, we lift our children to you. We love them, and we want to see them flourish in school. Lord, thank you for sustaining them through the months spent at home. Help them now to readjust and gladly benefit from being part of a school community once more. Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.

Loving Father,
thank you that you hear us when we pray.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit
and enable us to be the people
you made us to be,
wherever we find ourselves
and however weak we might feel.
Send us out and bless us
with the certain knowledge
that you are walking with us
each step of the way.
Amen.

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Monday	Oru (Nigeria); Canberra & Goulburn (Australia)
Tuesday	Osaka (Japan); Canterbury (England)
Wednesday	Osun (Nigeria); Cape Coast (West Africa)
Thursday	Osun North (Nigeria); Cape Town (Southern Africa); Carlisle (England)
Friday	Osun North East (Nigeria); Cashel & Ossory (Ireland)
Saturday	Ottawa (Canada); Central Buganda (Uganda)

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Luton, St Francis (Deanery of Luton)
Monday	Parish of Luton, St Hugh, Lewsey (Deanery of Luton)
Tuesday	Parish of Luton, St Matthew, High Town (Deanery of Luton)

Wednesday	Parish of Luton, St Paul (Deanery of Luton)
Thursday	Parish of Luton, St Saviour (Deanery of Luton)
Friday	Parish of Marsh Farm (Deanery of Luton)
Saturday	Parish of Stopsley, St Thomas (Deanery of Luton)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Beeson End Lane, Bewdley Close
Monday	Birch Way, Bowling Close
Tuesday	Broadstone Road, Burnsall Place
Wednesday	Burywick, Camberley Place
Thursday	Chaucer Close, The Chowns
Friday	Churchfield, Coleswood Road
Saturday	Collens Road, Cosne Mews

The Sick:

Berkeley, Emily, Amy Smart, Claire, Jo, Sue, Christine Strohm, Hermione, Karen, Sue Holt, Enid Giles, Jo Young and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Pat Morris

In their year's mind:

James Ogborn, Norah Russell, Sarah Spells, John Grose

[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.