

**LENT....BE STILL, OUR FRIDAY PRAYER THEME FOR MARCH** – reflection from Craig Grocock, Diocesan Spirituality Advisor

The theme this month is **Lent: Be Still**. Often a season, of course, of richly symbolic acts of worship, sublime music and shared, simple meals. Perhaps this year we might allow ourselves to cultivate a season of silent prayer, of being still.

The season of Lent lasts for forty days (not including Sundays). It is a time when Christians reflect and prepare for the celebrations of Easter. Some people fast, eat frugally or give up treats following the example of Jesus, who fasted for forty days in the wilderness. People also give to charity, set aside time to study the Bible and meet with other Christians to reflect on Jesus' life and prepare for the events of Holy Week and Easter. [Lent, Holy Week and Easter | The Church of England](#)

*“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10.10)*



**Craig Grocock, Shotton Rector**, has been in his role as Diocesan Spirituality Advisor since Autumn 2020. In case you missed it there is a super interview with Bishop John dating back to November that year, ending with the bishop's prayer for Craig that God would *'help us to hear what God is saying to us'*.

Background [New Diocesan Spirituality Adviser - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](#)

We heard about Craig's journey from conventional Anglican church involvement to personal faith in Jesus Christ as a teenager. A sense of call to share this good news with children and young people. Subsequent calls to work with the Church Army and Church of England along with his wife, Su.

The experienced treasures of Pentecostalism, Anglo-Catholicism and parish ministry in Southam and Shotton over fifteen years had at their core a deepening desire for *passionate* spirituality. And questions like **'what is He asking of me?'** have led to an openness to the kernel of faith in Christ Jesus and desire to prioritise communities of deeper discipleship across the Diocese.

Craig continues to explore the opportunities the role affords, and has spoken at a number of Deanery Synods as well as with specific churches and supports spiritual accompaniers and individuals with a call to explore spirituality in specific ways. He is currently planning a Lent talk for Shipston Deanery and in discussion about forming a new monastic community within the Diocese.

He is characteristically low key about his influence so far, but is convinced that *"spirituality is multi-faceted and should enable all of us to be more connected with ourselves as well as with God"*. Many have found themselves to be wounded through life experiences, yet embracing these challenges is invariably crucial to offering healing to others. The need to embody our faith is why he thinks it is so important that all of us find time to go on retreat.

**Sacha's Story.** Sacha Slavic described his journey with Benedictine spirituality on the Mucknell Abbey website in 2018. When we met for a curry recently, I was keen to understand the heart of his spirituality and practice as a chaplain, teacher and priest in our Diocese. Sacha returns time and time again to the balance between different aspects of his life, including study, recreation, work and of course prayer. It is as if his heart is enlarging on the journey, and he really does have a heart for whoever he encounters. His availability and readiness to respond, to be disrupted, seems to illustrate this very well – whether through chance encounters in a hospital, or measured responses to pastoral challenges at the Bablake and King Henry VIII schools, where he is chaplain.

Background <https://mucknellabbey.org.uk/sachas-story/>

| Sunday   | Monday  | Tuesday  | Wednesday  | Thursday  | Friday  | Saturday   |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
|  |   |  | 1<br>Fosse Deanery<br>AD - Patrick Taylor                                      | 2<br>Alveston<br>C - Linda MacDermott   | 3<br><b>Lent prayer</b><br><b>Be Still .....</b>  | 4<br>Alveston CofE Primary<br>School. H: Anne Clewley.   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 5<br>Barford and parishes<br>C – Andy Larkin                          | 6<br>Hampton Lucy CofE<br>Primary School & Nursery,<br>H: Margaret Lunnon | 7<br>St.Peter's CofE Primary<br>School, Barford. H: Mary<br>Baker.                             | 8<br>Race Equality Strategy,<br>Together for Change,<br>DAC meetings           | 9<br>Bishop Christopher;<br>Loxley CofE Primary School,<br>Loxley. H: Emma Barrick. | 10<br><b>Lent prayer</b><br><b>Be Still .....</b> | 11<br>Dassett Magna churches<br>C – Nicki Chatterton   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 12<br>The Dassett CofE School,<br>Fenny Compton. H:<br>Suzanne Corry. | 13<br>Edgehill churches<br>C – Barry Jackson                              | 14<br>Kineton CofE Primary<br>School, H: Margaret<br>Pollard.                                  | 15<br>Mid-Fosse Parishes<br>C – Lynda Lilley                                   | 16<br>Moreton Morrell CofE<br>Primary School. H: Sarah<br>Eadon. Growth Strategy    | 17<br><b>Lent prayer</b><br><b>Be Still .....</b> | 18<br>Stratford-upon-Avon<br>C – Patrick Taylor  |
| MOTHERING SUNDAY 19<br>Holy Trinity CofE Primary<br>School, Stratford-u-Avon.<br>H: Jo Herrero.      | 20<br>Shottery<br>C – Craig Grocock                                       | 21<br>Mission Hubs – St Laurence,<br>Foleshill; All Saints, Bed-<br>worth; St Andrew's, Rugby. | 22<br>Diocesan Board of<br>Education (DBE) meeting<br>today; St Mark's Academy | 23<br>Diocesan Strategic<br>Development Fund (SDF)<br>Working Group                 | 24<br><b>Lent prayer</b><br><b>Be Still .....</b> | 25<br>THE ANNUNCIATION<br>Diocesan Synod; Shottery<br>St Andrew's CofE Primary<br>School. H: Sarah Marshall. |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 26<br>Urban Church Plants in<br>Wyken, Tile Hill and<br>Hillfields    | 27<br>Clergy Safeguarding Day   | 28<br>Mission Hubs – St John,<br>Westwood; St Paul, Leam-<br>ington Spa; Alcester Minster      | 29<br>Wellesbourne & Walton<br>D'Eiville<br>C – Greg Bartlem                   | 30<br>Wellesbourne CofE<br>Primary and Nursery<br>School. H: Lindsey Oscroft.       | 31<br><b>Lent prayer</b><br><b>Be Still .....</b> | AD = Area Dean<br>C = Clergy<br>H = Headteacher  |

# PRAYER DIARY

Holy God, our lives are laid open before you: rescue us from the chaos of sin and through the death of your Son bring us healing and make us whole in Jesus Christ our Lord  
**Amen.**

[Lent, Holy Week and Easter | The Church of England](#)

Coming up – *the Themes for the next 3 months are, Renewing the Environment (April), Thy Kingdom Come (May) and Growing Leaders (June). Do consider sending me your prayer suggestions, and any other jottings.*

## BEING HEALTHY CHURCH

### PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY

All nine spiritual styles may well be present in a church congregation; NCD research shows that only 11% fit the style of the church where they worship. What difference does this make? **Spiritual Style Test** [Natural Character Development \(ncd.life\)](#)

## SPECIFIC DAYS IN MARCH 2023

**1 – Fosse Deanery** Area Dean, Patrick Taylor asks for prayer for those involved with developing the [Deanery Plan](#), especially for the Dasset Magna Group.

**2 – Alveston**

**5 – Barford** C -John Horton. R -Ann Fawcett, Chris Farr, Malcolm Dawson.

**11 – Dasset Magna** R – John Davies

**13 – Edgehill** Give thanks for the many people who give time, energy and talents to the life of the church and the community. For those who volunteer in church and school, and those that support the foodbank, House-to-Home, Bereavement café, and warm hub projects. Pray for wisdom as we continue to explore how we need to shape the church for a sustainable future. C – Beren Hartless, Alison Abbott R – Alan Hill, Pete Ashton

**15 – Mid-Fosse** In today's morning prayer Jesus says, 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12). We give thanks that Christ's light shines in the heart of these parishes and pray that Christ's light will shine into any areas of darkness that we might see and know how to be God's representatives here on earth. R - Richard Woodfin, Gillian Jones.

**16 –** please pray for the [Diocesan Growth Strategy](#) Steering Group as they meet today

**18 – Stratford-upon-Avon** prayers please for our new Choir School which will be reaching out to offer musical education to children who are otherwise deprived of this. C – Thomas Powell, Steve Jarvis, John Hall-Matthews. R - Phil Harper, Andrew Martin.

**20 – Shotton** Thank God for the appointment of our Children & Family worker, Caroline Penn. For the 'STAMP' children's community choir recently formed and the beginnings of monthly 'Chocolate Church'. Pray for our building of links with children and families especially through our schools and the growth of our family service. C - Mike Stewart, Sarah Cushing, Nikki Moon, Paul Edmondson, Joy Hance, David Capron, Mary Cramer, R - Jan Walker.

**21 –** For the [Mission Hubs](#) leaders gathering today with Diocesan staff, especially for the Rev Alison Baxter recently appointed as Associate for the Rugby MH and for those applying for the MH associate role at Bedworth (applications close March 24<sup>th</sup>)

**22 –** please pray for [St Mark's Academy](#) and all those who study there, for a continued stream of graduates who go on to serve in the diocese as fruitful lay leaders. Also pray for Rachel Atkinson, the Academy Principal, as she and the diocese make plans for the next academic year

**23 –** The **SDF project working group** meeting today. Matt Spina, Fr Ed Backhouse, Paul Pavlou, Paul Foster & Tris Peattie with Jenny Irvine, Andy Waddams and Dave Ridge.

**30 – Wellesbourne** [St Peter's Wellesbourne](#) We are excited about growing numbers at our services and a fantastic Christmas season, please pray that we can continue to build on the positive links with the wider village, especially amongst young families. [St James Walton](#) We are thankful for a packed Carol service and our wedding ministry, but are walking through a dark valley with too many deaths. C - Wendy Biddington, Norman Howes, Christopher Lamb, Heather Turner, William Howard, John Horton, Charmaine Host. R - Richard Bacon and Ian Host. Ordinand: Helen Smith.

**Other PTO clergy in the Fosse Deanery** – C - Stig Graham, Penelope Harrison, Roy Lodge, Diane Patterson, Jenny Rowland, Brian Russell, Richard Smith, Graham Wilcox

C = Clergy R = Reader

**Remember this? 10.30am, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1959** – Stephen Verney (*Fire in Coventry*) tells us that he met with Monks Kirby Chapter, when one of the clergy said he believed that the consecration of the cathedral 'is going to be a great spiritual opportunity'. God wanted a consecrated cathedral and a '*consecrated people living round it.*' So it was that they shared a Quiet Day together where an elderly priest said he thought they should meet each week. Many laughed at the impossibility of this commitment, but they made the decision to do so for three months. What had been a gathering of isolated clergy became a team, who knew and cared for one another, and where there was a willingness to admit to one another their own weaknesses. 'As they knelt together in prayer, perhaps above all as they were silent, they began to know that they belonged to one another and cared about each other's work, and that the mighty task to which they were committed and which was overwhelming them individually, was something they could tackle together in a strength greater than their own.'

Each month **we focus on a different Deanery; this month it is Fosse.**

Background [Deanery Videos - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](#)

*In April we will be praying for Coventry South Deanery, Rugby in May and Kenilworth in June. I look forward to receiving updates from area deans and clergy, and anyone else with specific prayer requests.*

## PRAYER JOTTINGS – MARCH 2023

- From Tyler Staton's *'Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools – an invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer'* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2022) Chapter 2. *Be Still and Know*. 'Many confuse stillness with waiting for revelation. Sometimes revelation does come, and it's marvelous. But that's not the purpose of stillness. The purpose is consent. It is the daily practice of consenting to the work of God's Spirit, which is deeper than understanding or words. It is how "deep calls to deep" from our souls to his. He describes some simple steps – a ritual – to sit quietly, hand face up, and pray something simple and intentional like 'Lord, have mercy' (pages 50, 51) – Then, he says 'be quiet. Be still, Wait ... starting with 2 minutes, he suggests increasing this to 4 minutes after a month, then 6, until you get to ten minutes. One day, he says, you will look up and be able to say 'silent prayer became a lifeline, an essential. 'Give God the first word,' and 'let spoken prayer follow as a response.'

### NEVER TOO LATE TO BE STILL .....



**Rev Steve Kelly, Associate Minister, Alcester Minster, pictured here with wife Maggie, shares more about their journey this Lent.**

I have always been inspired by Paul's prayer in Ephesians chapter 3. It begins quietly and

humbly and rises to a glorious declaration of God's power with a vision of what might happen when God has His way in our lives! At the heart of it is a prayer that Paul's readers might 'know the love that surpasses knowledge'. Not just to know more *about* God's love but to *experience it more deeply*.

In recent years, I have been resourced and inspired by **the 24-7 Prayer** movement and more recently **the Order of the Mustard Seed** to explore a deeper life of prayer; prayer that leads to generous living, hospitality and mission. Richard Foster<sup>1</sup> talks about the "*contemplative love that leads us forth in partnership with God into creative and redeeming work.*" I think this captures so beautifully the rhythm or balance of prayer and action, retreating and advancing, being and doing!

Tom Wright's brief commentary<sup>2</sup> on Paul's prayer in Ephesians puts it like this:

*"The western church has perhaps allowed itself to be lulled into thinking that prayer and action are at the opposite ends of the scale*

*of Christian activity. On the contrary! Those who want their actions to be effective for God's kingdom should redouble their time and effort in prayer."*

Although I have a passion to see individuals and Christian communities giving themselves wholeheartedly to mission and evangelism, I have long since realised that it needs to flow (or *overflow*) from a place of excitement and passion rather than duty or obligation.

So as our ministry team here in **the Alcester Minster** looked ahead to 2023 with the challenges and opportunities of mission and service in our rural communities, we realised we needed to invest more time in prayer rather than simply starting more mission activities and projects. As we contemplated the theme of 'life in all its fullness', we asked the question, "*are we experiencing the love of God and the life He wants to give us, day by day?*"

Lent seemed an ideal time to create some space to go on a journey together and the **Be Still** course from the 24-7 Prayer website was just what we needed. The course lasts 5 weeks and is centred around the verse that most of us know so well:

*"Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."* Psalm 46:10

This verse encourages us to stop and to listen. To enjoy His company and to give Him our full attention! To open ourselves up to God and to let Him have His way in our lives. It's something that should come naturally to us but so many people find it almost impossible to *simply be still!* As we embark on this course, we aim to learn some new *holy habits* and experience God in the stillness.

I'm encouraged to hear so many people, from different traditions, encouraging us to rediscover the ancient paths (Jer 6:16) and to find new depths in prayer. Tyler Staton<sup>3</sup> writes:

*"Stillness is the quiet space where God migrates from the periphery to the centre and prayer pours forth from the life that has God at the centre."*

Perhaps this is our greatest need at this present time. To *recentre our scattered senses* and rediscover the life giving presence of God!

The **Be Still** course can be found here: <https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/be-still-series/>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Foster. Streams of Living Water (London: HarperCollins, 1999)

<sup>2</sup> Tom Wright. Ephesians for Everyone. (SPCK Publishing, 2009)

<sup>3</sup> Tyler Staton. Praying like monks, living like fools (Hodder & Stoughton, 2022)

- **Spiritual revival**, historically, has taken many different forms, but as I prepare this edition of the prayer diary there are many reports across the media of a campus revival in Asbury, Kentucky – it is quite low key, in many ways, but people in the UK are commenting on it supportively, and the service *that didn't end* was continuing beyond 10 days as I write this. Try #asbury on Google to see what this looks like. People are repenting, worshipping, listening in fresh ways.
- **Alive 23**. This is a massive free Diocesan praise party and celebration for Key Stage 2 children, school staff, clergy and governors on 15 & 16 June 2023. Please pray for volunteers to help steward, connections for parishes where there is no CofE school. Let's keep praying across the coming days, weeks and months, for this significant initiative.

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