

## ***Report from Synod (Area) Prayer Days.***

### **Summary**

In agreement with the Synod Area leaders I organised four prayer days:

<b><i>Synod Area</i></b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Location</i></b>	<b><i>Attendees</i></b>
EKSA/WKESSA	8 July	Cade Road UC, Ashford	16
S&SSA	22 July	Crawley URC	14
SLSA	11 Aug	Crossways URC, Elephant & Castle	7
CSU	9 Sep	Emmanuel UC, Eastbourne	9

These days were designed to focus on listening to God in prayer. Various prayer activities were offered, such as walking a labyrinth, prayer walks, centring prayer, etc. as well as craft as a focus for prayer. Two group prayer activities were offered: Listening Prayer and Lectio Divina as a group. This was topped and tailed with worship. The days also started to bring our own agendas to God in the form of prayers written on Post-It notes.

I have to express my deep gratitude to Deirdre Harrison who facilitated the Listening Prayer activities and Revd Wendy Swan who facilitated praying through art.

The best group size seemed to have been around 20 people, but unfortunately most of our meetings had less attendees than this. Two meetings needed to be rescheduled on very short notice, due to a train/tube strike (Elephant & Castle) and Emmanuel, Eastbourne's new building not being available earlier. It may be that because of the rescheduling attendance was not quite so high in these locations.

I believe most people valued the reflective nature of this kind of praying and I had a sense that quite a lot of the attendees did engage with the various prayer activities. Below you can see some of the results of the various meetings.

It was my hope that we would receive guidance from God for our Churches, Synod Areas and Synods. The overarching theme of all these days were focused on "Jesus being the Centre", "Listen to God", "building our relationship with Christ" This may be quite obvious, but perhaps all of us are so busy with 'doing Church' that we actually do not have much time to make Jesus the Centre, in our personal lives, but also in our common live in the various councils of the Church.

*Revd Bernard Fidder, 6 Oct 2023*

### **Phrases from the different listening exercises**

- Journeying together with our eyes on Jesus and our ears open to his prompting
- Our mutual fellowship in and with the Holy Spirit should lead us to encourage one another and preserve in faith
- Jesus be the centre has spoken to me many times during the day. In holding on to that comes the challenge to build others up so that Jesus be the centre becomes our flagship locally
- We have Good News to pass on about Jesus; we are a community enveloped in his love but reaching out to the outside
- Draw near to God / Draw near to each other / Synod / Area / Local Churches / We are the family of God / Thanks be to God

- Fundamental focus on fellowship with Jesus must go alongside discernment, community service and outreach. Local prayer and Synod facilitation needed. Local Church + Synod must both journey together whilst not knowing what the destination is/
- To listen to God, give God time each day (I'm too busy to give God a few minutes each day)
- It is a privilege to meet brothers and sisters in Christ that we have not met before
- A real positive experience, putting 'prayerfully' in practice. Fulfills a goal set by our Synod Area.
- This day has shown the value of coming together on prayerful reflection on our practice
- Jesus is at the Centre
- Picture of a map with flags indicating the URCs. Big or small churches, all contribute and form us together
- We are individual and corporate – all to be used
- Joy and outreach, all because of Jesus
- We must not get cosy within our church groups
- It was felt that we needed to look to Jesus (or hold his hand), but also be able to link to the outside world
- Boat journey – we don't know where we are going but we have faith
- From Centring Prayer leaflet: God's first language is silence
- Different churches but the same thoughts – How do we move forward. We want to do this!
- A labyrinth outward prayer journey: *"The Trinity. Jesus. A fresh building of spiritual relationship – out pouring of the breath of God – listening to God – resting in God to receive a new excitement in the Holy Spirit – building up our own faith – sharing that with the body of the church – build community – build a praying community - binding together through Christ being the centre – seek spiritual gifts – encourage and grow the gifts – pray that God will take us out in the world – growing his Kingdom.*
- Picture: One light (beacon) then more lights covering the whole country
- "Here I am, Lord"
- Don't be over concerned with getting older – the Lord will give us strength to carry on
- Need underpinning of younger families – fresh enthusiasm
- End of difficult year for folk – people need a rest
- Space and time – busy doing and not being
- The Lord will make us stronger
- We are all warriors for Jesus
  - Angels with their armour are there too
- Strong feeling of prayer needed for the Synod with Bridget off for recovery, new Synod Clerk, New Synod Convenor and Staffing review. A new mission officer needed
- Lectio Divina on Jesus calming the storm and Peter walking on water.
  - Peter walked!
  - Jesus saved him!
  - Are we keeping our eyes on Jesus, or on all that is around us?
- Reminder of the fruit of the Spirit
- Focus on Jesus – Name above all names
- Spirit of God => Spirit of Truth



Imagery





