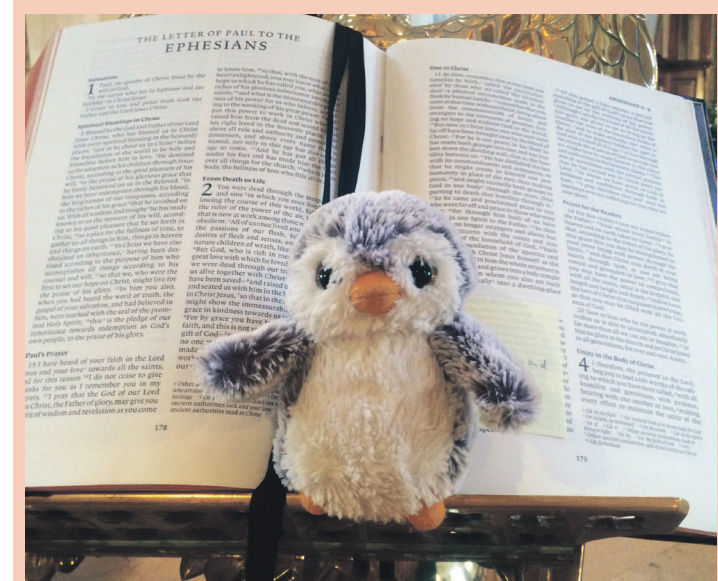




Above left: Daniel Vartan, Ella Clarke and Lucy Clarke pray in Whiteley's Church Without Walls garden; right: the Rev Philippa Mills and Bethany Vartan with the bonfire

Above left: Jane and David Isaac collect the candles for Shedfield and Wickham from our cathedral; right: students from Charter Academy pray in St Luke's Church

# Creative prayer lit up Thy Kingdom Come



Arnold the Praying Penguin in one of the Instagram posts

## Arnold the Penguin is our prayer partner

A TOY penguin became an unlikely inspiration for prayer in St Wilfrid's Church, Cowplain.

Intern Jenny Dickin decided to utilise the parish's social media platforms to encourage people to pray during Thy Kingdom Come.

The idea was to reach those who weren't sure about visiting the prayer stations in church or couldn't make it.

Jenny had been given Arnold the Penguin earlier this year, and felt he would be the perfect creature to catch people's attention.

So each day, Arnold the Praying Penguin featured in a photo that suggested

people to pray for or a way in which to pray. People interacted with his posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Jenny said: "Lots of people were able to use Arnold's posts as guidance for their prayers, especially those who weren't quite sure where to begin.

"A firm favourite was Arnold's photo with Bishop Christopher, as he asked people to pray for church leaders as they welcomed new people coming to know Christ."

Arnold enjoyed it so much, he has now launched a blog all about different ways of praying. It's at: [www.arnoldprays.co.uk](http://www.arnoldprays.co.uk)

**A**LL over the diocese, we got on our knees in response to the call for Christians to pray.

We heeded our Archbishops' prompting to spend 10 days praying for more people to hear the gospel message. It was part of their Thy Kingdom Come initiative which urged us to pray in new ways between Ascension Day and Pentecost.

Worshippers in our diocese prayed individually at home, at school and at work. Parishes organised extra prayer meetings, created innovative prayer installations and even took turns to pray for 24 hours in a row. Some congregations did prayer walks, or took part in fasting, while others used specially-written liturgy in services or kept their church buildings open during the day so people could pop in to pray at their convenience.

And it was all sparked by an event in **Portsmouth Cathedral** ahead of Ascension Day which showcased some innovative ways to pray. Clergy and prayer champions gathered to pick up ideas to use in their own churches during those 10 days.

The prayer stations on display involved using maps and newspapers to pray for local and national issues; ropes in which to tie knots to represent each prayer; and ink pads to print the names of individuals to be prayed for – among many other creative ideas.

There was also a giant map of Portsmouth diocese laid out on the cathedral floor, with 139 Thy Kingdom Come candles – one for each parish – placed on the map. Representatives from each parish took home their own candle, which worshippers lit each time they prayed as part of Thy Kingdom Come.

The cathedral event on May 20 also involved different styles of worship being showcased, from contemporary guitar-led worship to silent meditation, and from all-age worship to chanting in the style of the



Above: Parish representatives pick up their Thy Kingdom Come candles from the giant map of our diocese in the cathedral; right: Evie Watson, 7, prays with the Rev Amy Webb using the cathedral's Pentecost-themed prayer station

Taize Community in France.

Among those attending was Clare King, from **Holy Trinity, Bembridge**, on the Isle of Wight, who said: "I think this is fantastic and gives us some ideas that we can use. It's really encouraging being here with people from all over the diocese learning about creative ways to pray. We did Thy Kingdom Come last year, opening the church up for people to pop in and to pray at various prayer stations."

And Joyce Seaman, from **All Saints Church, Botley**, said: "It's great to be here, and lovely to see so many ways to pray. I think this is a great initiative by Archbishop Justin and by our bishop, and we're taking part in Botley, Curdridge and Dursley."

Worshippers at **Whiteley Church** pitched a tent in their Church Without Walls garden next to Cineworld for 24 hours of prayer, from the Sunday afternoon to the Bank Holiday Monday.

The vicar, the Rev Philippa Mills and churchwarden Jo Vartan committed themselves to spending 24 hours in prayer, with others joining them for all-age prayer activities and two sanctuary spaces for quiet individual prayer. Unfortunately it rained for 19 of those 24 hours.

Philippa said: "In the dry five hours we enjoyed great fellowship round a fire and barbecue, beginning with Evening Prayer and ending with Night Prayer from the Hopeweavers Community. We made glow stick crosses to add to our flame

prayers and hung them in the trees.

"The remaining rather soggy 19 hours gave plenty of chance for reflection on the importance of a quiet sanctuary space so close to the commercial busyness of the shopping centre. We had some good conversations with our few visitors and watched spectacular lightning during the night time thunder storm!"

Those from **St Peter's, Titchfield**, also held a 24-hour prayer vigil, which began with a short service of Compline on the Tuesday, which was well attended and provided encouragement as the vigil started.

The church had been prepared with five prayer stations, each of which included a different opportunity to engage



with prayer, including one for children. Three people per hour were available to pray and greet people during the day in church. Prayer continued overnight, when the church was closed, in the chapter room. It concluded with a short service of thanksgiving on the Wednesday evening.

The curate, the Rev Janet Trevithick, said: "It was a wonderful and encouraging 24 hours as Titchfield came together in church to offer ours and community prayers. Those who took part all felt truly blessed themselves in adding significantly to the worldwide wave of prayer."

It was definitely Pentecost at **St Luke's in Southsea**, with a massive installation taking over the church space, bringing visual, audio and creative engagement into the prayer life of the church.

RE classes from Charter Academy visited in the week before half term, and the church was open for public prayer every lunchtime and evening.

Pioneer minister Susie Templeton said: "There were six different prayer stations, picking up on themes from the Pentecost story and the growth of the early church. We were encouraged to think about the story and the issues it raised, and respond in a variety of creative ways - drawing our



vision for the future, building a flame of prayers, praying in different languages, writing a letter to God or even using glow sticks! Once half term arrived, we laid out a labyrinth of fairy lights as a reminder that prayer is a journey with God in the power of the Holy Spirit."

And those from the parishes of **Soberton and Newtown** held a simple Communion service in a marquee. More than 50 worshippers helped to celebrate the theme of Thy Kingdom Come and give thanks for the community fete held the previous day, which attracted more than 1,500 people. Both events took place in the garden of a Newtown parishioner.

Hundreds of thousands of Christians of all denominations across the world are thought to have joined in Thy Kingdom Come this year.

More than 250,000 resources were ordered to help churches take part, including family-friendly kits, gospels, prayer journals and formal liturgies. Thy Kingdom Come prayers are still available online, and participants are also being encouraged to post their own prayers and images on social media using the hashtag #thykingdomcome. For more details, see [www.thykingdomcome.global](http://www.thykingdomcome.global).

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