



**Nine Days of Prayer 2016**  
Friday 6 to Saturday 14 May

**Conversations at the Crossroads**

## **Welcome to the 2016 Pocket Prayers**

Brothers and sisters, we invite you to join Christians across the church in using these daily prayers from Friday 6th May to Saturday 14th May.

Our models of prayer during the Novena are the apostles as they stayed in Jerusalem after the Ascension, waiting for the Holy Spirit - the 'power from on high' that came at Pentecost. Our unifying prayer is: Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

Decision making is a rich ingredient to our flourishing as human beings. Crossroads are times for conversations, when decisions need to be made. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, pictured on the cover, is where we see Jesus in conversation with the Elders. We need his wisdom now too - in abundance.

These nine days of prayer are a focussed opportunity to listen to scripture, to allow the artistic images provided and the emerging conversations to shape our hearts for a renewal of purpose, so we can make wise decisions. These conversations will be different for all of us, but could involve wrestling, speaking our differences, not knowing what to do, and visions galore.

May we be blessed as we wait together upon God.

## How to use these Pocket Prayers each day

**LOOK** at these scenes, and meet the characters caught up in decisive moments. Here, past and future are being shaped before our eyes. These characters reveal the inner landscapes hidden within the Word, inviting us to travel with them.

**WAIT** prayerfully for the Holy Spirit, alongside those who have reached a crossroads and have found a way ahead. Pause to receive, during these nine days, his guidance at the turning points of our lives.

**READ** the Bible text, and allow each story to spark your imagination.

**LISTEN** with attentiveness, asking God for a word or a picture, a gift of insight that points you and your community forward into the future. Let these emerge as you pray.

**RESPOND** to the prompting of the Word; discover the next step of action. Let the collect gather up and bless this time and the new place you are called to inhabit.



# Friday 6 May - Jacob Wrestling

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*The same night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.*

(Genesis 32.22-31)

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

God of many names,  
you offer us the pain and struggle of a re-naming too.  
As you show us our true identities,  
teach us to persevere with the darkness  
and so to prevail as the sun rises.  
Bless us, even as we limp onwards,  
changed by our encounter  
with Jesus Christ, the living Lord. Amen.



# Saturday 7 May - Ruth and Boaz

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favour.' So she went. Ruth came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, 'The LORD be with you.' They answered, 'The LORD bless you.' Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'To whom does this young woman belong?' The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, 'She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.*

*Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.' Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?' (Ruth 2.2-10 abridged)*

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

God of all the world's open space  
you know how hard it is for us  
to make room for one another,  
to offer a place of safety to the stranger in our midst.  
As Boaz blessed the life of Ruth and Naomi  
bringing them respect and hope and home,  
bless us, and keep us under your wings of refuge  
for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ,  
who had no place to lay his head. Amen.



# Sunday 8 May - The Exiles

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

(Jeremiah 29.1, 4-7, 11)

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

God of the displaced,  
we give thanks that when we are insecure,  
you offer us security,  
when we are abandoned, you come to find us.  
You invite us to embed ourselves in community,  
to discover that you, already among us,  
enable the flourishing of all that is good.  
We pray in the name of Jeshua of Bethlehem,  
of Egypt, of Nazareth...  
(You may add other place names here - Syria, Calais...)  
Amen.



# Monday 9 May - The Valley of Dry Bones

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.*  
(Ezekiel 37.1-6, 10)

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

O breath of God, life-giving Spirit,  
when all seems lost,  
when all the bones are dry,  
grant us the vision and courage to speak your words  
so that those who have lost life might find it once more;  
and if we ourselves have come apart,  
reconfigure us and stand us on our feet  
in the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
your broken and resurrected son. Amen.



# Tuesday 10 May - The Visitation of Mary

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.*

(Luke 1.28-31, 34-35, 37-38)

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

As Gabriel visited Mary, you visit us  
with news that we carry the life of your son within us.  
As you have sent him through the Holy Spirit,  
may we, like Mary, birth and welcome him  
into the many homes from which we come.  
May it be as you have said,  
so that he can be known to our world  
as Jesus Christ, child of Mary, child of God. Amen.



# Wednesday 11 May - Jesus in the temple

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.*

(Luke 2.41-52)

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

God who dwells in temple and heart,  
when we are rushing round anxiously without you,  
when we forget to seek you in the obvious place,  
still us; sit us down in your presence,  
amaze us with your wisdom  
and show us where our true focus should really be –  
on Jesus Christ your son, our Lord. Amen.



# Thursday 12 May - Jesus and the child's offering

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.*

(John 6.3, 5-13)

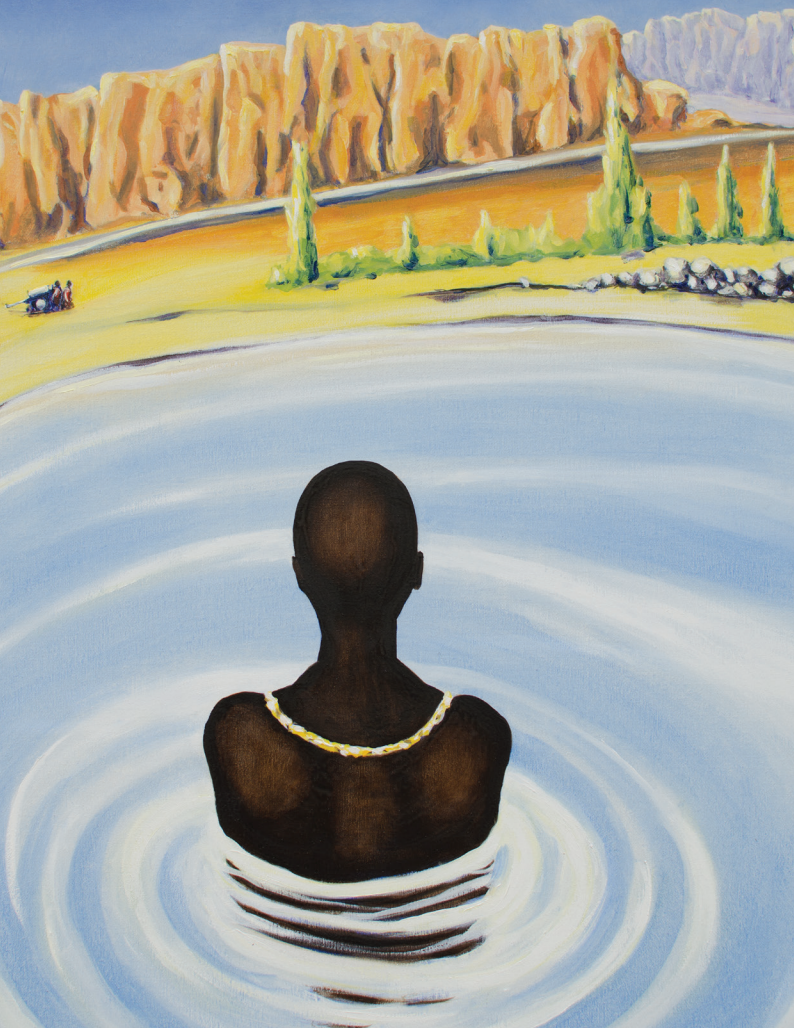
**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

Providing God,

help us to recognise what children and young people  
are bringing to your Church  
so that the hungry may be fed.

May we lose nothing of their openness and engagement  
and may we too discover a childlike joy  
sharing your gifts with all who are in need  
and blessing them in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



# Friday 13 May - Philip and the Ethiopian

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' Now there was an Ethiopian come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' So Philip ran up to it and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:*

*'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him.'*

*The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Starting with this scripture, Philip proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8.26-38 abridged.)*

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

Traveller God,

you are also on the dusty road.

Sometimes we find ourselves alongside those with questions,  
the excluded and sad, those seeking new life.

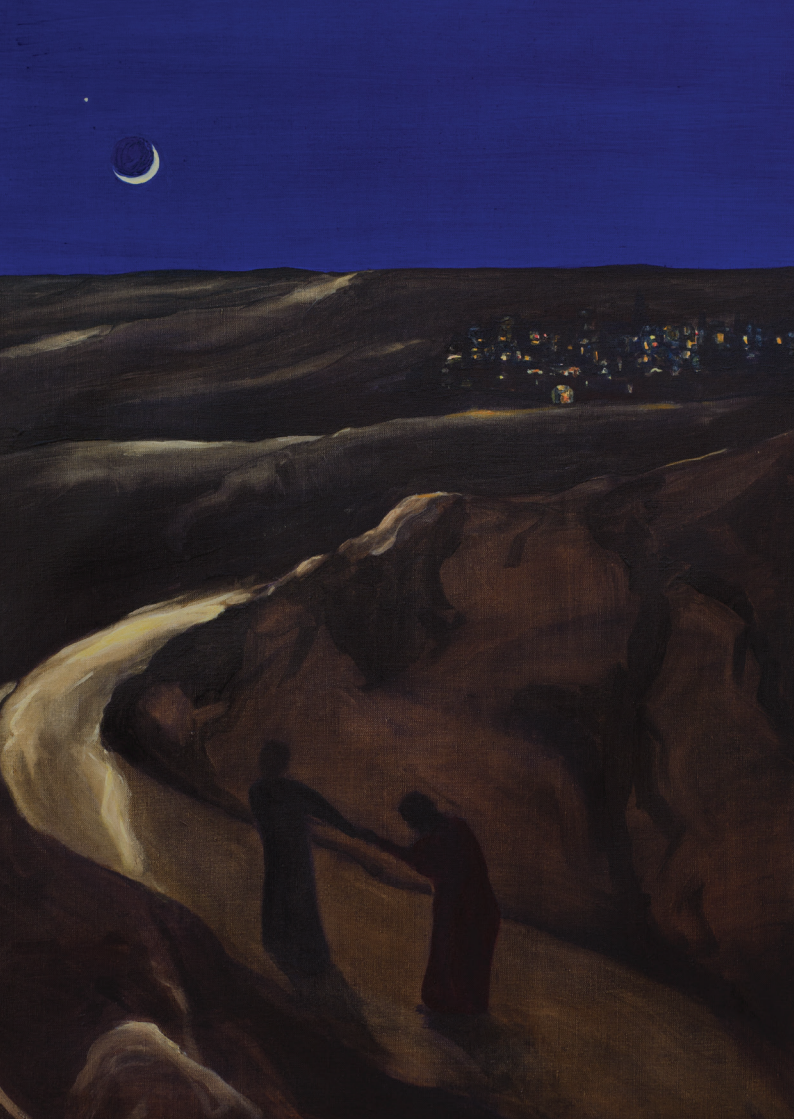
Sometimes we ourselves are those people.

Teach us not to delay a moment longer

but to both offer and receive the water of life

and with it, new perspectives on the journey

in the company of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



# Saturday 14 May - The conversion of Paul

**LOOK...and be curious.**

**WAIT...with prayerful expectation.**

Come Holy Spirit: meet us at our crossroads.

**READ...the text with an open mind.**

*Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.*

(Acts 9.10-19)

**LISTEN...for a word with a willing heart.**

**RESPOND...with prayer and action.**

Blazing God,  
your light is dangerous to us!  
You close our eyes so that we may open them afresh  
on a new world  
where grace and truth replace stones and hatred  
and we are dazzled by the bright love of your son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## **Meet the artist - Adam Boulter**

Adam's work with its focuses on landscape and religious themes is concerned with sacred in places as diverse as the inner-city and deserts, and in ancient stories and sacred texts.

Adam's work has been an interplay between his dual callings of being a painter and a priest. Adam trained in painting and drawing to MA level before exhibiting widely around London. During this time he also ran art retreats for Christian retreat centres, set up and managed interfaith youth projects, and worked as an expedition artist. He then went to Cambridge University to study Theology and train as a priest. Since then he has been a parish priest in an inner-city parish in south London and recently returned to the UK from being the Port Chaplain with the Mission Seafarers in Aqaba in Jordan.

You can see Adam's work at [www.adamboulter.co.uk](http://www.adamboulter.co.uk)

These pocket prayers are provided to help you pray daily, whenever and wherever you can, between Ascension and Pentecost. You will be joining individuals, groups, schools, churches and deaneries praying together throughout the Diocese.

Pray expecting the Holy Spirit to empower us in new ways; wait for a renewing experience of God's strengthening to us and our Christian communities.

With grateful thanks to Adam Boulter for giving permission to reproduce his paintings.

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