

Pray 168 Prayer Themes

We welcome you warmly to the first edition of our themes for prayer. We invite you to make full use of what follows as we come together before the Lord for our city of Southampton. If, as you pray, you have ideas of themes of your own, we would love to hear from you.

The overall goal of our prayers is that:

1. Each of us who prays will draw nearer to God.
2. The church in Southampton will become more full of Christ.
3. The whole city will be blessed and re-awakened to God.

Our hope is that the themes will keep our united prayers consistent (we stay focussed on the same things) and **comprehensive** (we cover a range of important topics). But, within that comprehensive range, we very much want to encourage the prayers of each of us to be **specific** (so we pray for real people and real situations you know about).

The idea is that you cycle through the themes at your own pace, though it is almost certainly worth thinking seriously about using the first four each week because their focus is on the biggest matters of faith. After that, you might take the others at the rate of one each week or you might do them all each week or somewhere in the middle of those options. Just please be faithful in lifting these themes to the Lord.

As a starting point, each theme has an outline, a prayer and a bible passage. Beyond this we will each pray according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

So now it's time to make our commitment real - let's jump into prayer and explore the feast that God is preparing for us all and let's reveal his purposes for our city!

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1 Church: Seek Him Only

SCRIPTURE: *One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)*

OUTLINE: The foundation of the House of Prayer is our devotion. Our single-minded pursuit of His presence. Now is time to worship, to pour out your heart for Him. To rest in his presence. To ascribe greatness to Him. As we come into His presence, we are changed. Let all our praying arise from this place of worship and devotion.

PRAYER: *Turn all your thoughts and emotions toward our Father. Do not feel rushed. Let your worship rise up in your own words.*

2 Church: Humble Obedience

SCRIPTURE:

When I.... ..send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

You are my friends if you do what I command.(John 15:14)

OUTLINE: Above all else, let us humble ourselves and seek the Lord's face. Let our personal stance be one of repentance, humbly seeking God. This is more important than any of our plans or projects. We believe that God is using the current time to shake up the way things are or have been in the past. We need radical, humble seeking for God and his face only. In this time, recommit your life to Jesus, listening for his commands to you. Also pray for your church and all of us who follow Jesus, that above all else, we will be obedient to Him.

PRAYER: *Dear Father, I return to you. I stop. I seek your face. I listen to you. I lay before you my life, my habits, my actions. Holy Spirit, shine the light of your truth over all of my life and guide me into a way of life that pleases you in every way. Jesus, I am listening for your commands to me. May obedience to You be the core value of my life. Amen.*

3 Society: Repentance Leading To Revival Of Faith

SCRIPTURE: *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near". (Matt 4:17)*

OUTLINE: Higher than any other need is the need for our society to return to God. To turn from going our own way. To return to Him. Our great desire is to see a new awakening to God across our city. The precursor to this is the passionate, persistent prayer of the church that brings a smile to God's face. We then must sit in trust that our awakening will result in the city's awakening.

PRAYER: *Lord, we live in an age where people wander aimlessly looking for something to give them meaning and life. What they seek they do not find, because they are not finding it in you, the only true source of life. So we come to ask you for what we desire: a revival of souls in our city. Lord, we desire it for our friends, our families, and neighbours. We pray with longing that they will be open to you. We invite your Holy Spirit to pour out onto the people you have made. We invite you to perform miracles, wonders that speak to the people you crafted with your hands. We invite you to bring them to their knees in sorrow for the ways that they have hurt you, so that you can then raise them up into the fullness of new life and purpose in you. We pray this in the mighty name of Jesus.*

We invite you to pray for individuals you know by name.

4 Church: Making Disciples

SCRIPTURE:

And Jesus said to them: Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men. (Mark 1:17)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt 28:18-20)

OUTLINE: In modern language, a disciple is an apprentice to Jesus. We try to be like him, doing what he would do if he were us. Our culture with its many distractions tempts us into apathy. Our Lord gave a simple mission to the first disciples which is handed down to us. We are praying for all believers to see themselves as disciples who obediently make disciples of others. Ask God who you should be making into disciples.

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, I am following you. I am your apprentice. Help me today to follow your pattern of life for me. May my apathy be replaced by desire and willingness to be a radical disciple. Teach me how to make disciples of others. Holy Spirit give us a new simplicity in the Body of Christ to focus our energies on making disciples. And show me who you have placed in my life so that I can help them follow you. Amen*

5 Church: our leadership

SCRIPTURE: *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate faith Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13.7,17)*

OUTLINE: Everyone suffers, but a church flock often looks to leaders to be strong; almost superhuman. We expect our pastors and leaders to deal with whatever comes at them and to remain unflinching in faith, whatever the size of the challenge - and the challenges that

they face in our present secular society and changing Church can be immense. But pastors and other church leaders, as well as the spouses and families of these leaders, need their congregations to know that they, like everyone else, need support and that they appreciate our realistic expectations when they experience life's challenges. And our best support comes as prayer.

PRAYER: Almighty God, I come before you on behalf of the church leaders of our city. I name my own church leader, (say his/her name), giving thanks that you know the names of all the others. Lord, bless them, guide them, give them deep faith, wisdom, strength and your encouragement. May they discern your word for our congregation. Protect them and their families against any weapons formed against them, I specifically pray for their health and their relationships. Do this so that they may lead and serve us, Your people, in Spirit and truth. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

As well as individual church leaders, we commend to your prayers the leaders of Southampton Christian Network, Love Southampton, Southampton City Mission, the Amber Chaplains (supporting women who work in the sex industry), Southampton House of Prayer, CAP (Christians Against Poverty), Street Pastors, Caraway (supporting the elderly) & Firgrove (counselling and support)

6 Community Life

SCRIPTURE: Thus says the LORD of hosts,'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. (Jeremiah 29.4,7)

OUTLINE: Jesus calls us to love our neighbours and we're often good at doing this through our many acts of simple, tangible service as Christians within our local communities. These are all wonderful, but another valuable way that we can love our neighbours is by praying for them. It's a way that is open to all of us, whatever our capacity. Both acts of service and prayer spread the love of Jesus. What greater an honour is ours than to spread that love!

PRAYER: Lord of light, I pray that unity may prevail in all of the communities of Southampton. I especially pray for unity within my own community (name your community). Help me personally to be an instrument of your peace and the spreading of your love here. Help Christians together in our city to lead the way and to cooperate well in resolving the issues that affect us all. Amen.

We especially commend to your prayers family life, relationships between neighbours, the safety of our communities, that local poverty and loneliness would be alleviated and racial tensions and other forms of discrimination eased, & that there would be an end to homelessness. We invite you to pray for your immediate neighbours by name - find out their names if you don't already know them.

7 Children and Young People

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.' (Matthew 18.3-4, 10)

OUTLINE: Children and young people are often thought of as the future: but they are also the present. And they are our present from Jesus. Their experiences of the present also form the adults that they will one day become. So it is our duty as Christians in Southampton to bring Jesus into the present lives of not just our own children, but the lives of all of the young people of our city. We can do this through our prayers and our actions. So very, very many children don't know Jesus. So very, very many adults who care for children don't know Jesus. The task that we face is huge, but Jesus can and will equip us for it. He is waiting for us to ask him.

PRAYER: *Lord, we pray for you to be made known wherever there are children and young people in our city. We pray that our churches will be equipped and impassioned to reach out to our young people. We pray against the pressures that young people face from our increasingly digital culture and from the growing brokenness of families and poverty. And we ask you to place your people in positions of authority and care for children and young people so that your love can become active in the lives of each one. Amen.*

We specifically commend to your prayers the parents of young people and those involved in education in Southampton - we suggest that you name before the Lord your local schools, colleges and universities, pre-schools and nurseries. Also local youth projects and clubs. Pray for social services relating to children and young people. And pray for all adults employed in these sectors. Pray regularly, by name, for individual children you know.

8 Older People

SCRIPTURE: *My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day. Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. (Psalm 71.8-9, 17-18)*

OUTLINE: There are now more people aged over 65 in the UK than are aged under 16, so we are an ageing society. Growing older has its own joys and challenges - more time with retirement, but declining physical and mental health and mobility, perhaps reduced income, and increasing dependence on help from others.

PRAYER: *Lord, you have always been our refuge: before you created the hills, before you brought the world into being, you are God from all time - and you will be God forever; a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday, already gone. We are like flowers that spring up in the morning, bloom in the afternoon and die in the evening:*

*Lord, you know our weakness and our sinfulness -
teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wiser.*

We pray for those who know their days are numbered, and for those whose strength is fading; we remember those whose later years are passing by and those who are weak or in trouble or sorrow: Lord, have pity on them, fill them each morning with your love that they may praise you and be glad.

Give them as much happiness as they have had sadness; let them see your strength, and your blessing upon those they love:

*O Lord, bless them and prosper them;
in the name of Jesus our redeemer. Amen.*

We specifically commend to your prayers all older people who are at home, especially those living alone and struggling with ill health and limited care packages; the residents and staffs of sheltered housing units, rest homes; and the work of Caraway and of the Anna Chaplains serving those who are older, those who have dementia, and all who are lonely, isolated and vulnerable.

9 Care for the Environment

SCRIPTURE: You have given humanity dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8.6-8)

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! (Psalm 150.6)

OUTLINE: It is clear that there is an environmental crisis in the world at present. Pollution by man and the global warming it produces is a reality and we're feeling the effects in our climate, our health and our altered geography. If we don't take more serious steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, the very future of our planet is at risk.

PRAYER: O God in whom we live and move and have our being, awaken us to your presence, that we may walk in your world as your children. Grant us reverence for all your creation, that we may treat our fellow human beings with kindness, and all living things and the whole planet with gentleness and reverence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We specifically commend to your prayers issues of pollution and recycling, litter and tending of our green spaces, care for the ocean, praying that God would save planet earth from the greed and foolishness of the human race; that he would give us the will to live simply so that others can simply live.

10 Health

SCRIPTURE: Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pay over him ... and the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. (James 5.13-15)

Value the services of a doctor, for he has his place assigned to him by the Lord. His skill comes from the Most High In time of illness do not be remiss, but pray to the Lord and he will heal you ... And the doctor should be called; keep him by you, for you need him also. A time may come when your recovery is in his hands; then he too will pray to the Lord to grant success in relieving pain and finding a cure to save the patient's life. (Ecclesiasticus [in the Apocrypha] 38.1-2, 9, 12-14)

OUTLINE: We all face health challenges at different times of our life. They can be in our bodies, in our minds or in our spirits. Health care providers of all sorts are a huge blessing to us and the NHS has to be one of the most wonderful features of the life of our land. It is

God's will for us that we should all be healthy, and he has provided many different ways in which he brings that health to us.

PRAYER: Hear us, O Lord, as we remember before you those who have a special need of you at this time: those who have lost the health and strength that once were theirs; all who lie in pain; those who are in doubt or in anguish of soul. Comfort them, O Lord, and raise up and sustain helpers for them in their need; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We specifically commend to your prayers all in our city who are suffering physically, mentally or emotionally, and also our hospitals, local health centres and allied healthcare services and professionals, pharmacists, counsellors and complementary therapists.

11 The Economy, Business & Life of our Gateway City

SCRIPTURE: Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. They cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. (Psalm 107.23-24, 28-30)

OUTLINE: The economy and business life of our city embraces a wide range of subjects: employment and unemployment; retail, hospitality, manufacturing, financial services, logistics; the docks and the vessels that come in and out of them carrying food, cars, goods and passengers. Southampton is in many respects a 'Gateway City,' one that people and goods travel through en route to elsewhere.

PRAYER: O God, we ask you to bless our 'Gateway City' - to bless those who dwell here and those who pass through it. Bless our city with many good work opportunities to give individuals purpose and peace. Help those who work here to work with all their might and for your glory. Grant the spirit of wisdom and justice to our leaders of industry and commerce. Bless all who are employed in offices and factories and shops; strengthen those who labour at the docks or on the ships; take care of all whose work is difficult, dangerous, dirty or dull; and help us all to follow the steps of him who worked as a carpenter - Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We specifically commend to your prayers all who are in employment and all who are unemployed and seeking for work; the manufacturing and retail industries, the hospitality industry, the financial services industry; logistics (including our delivery services - posties, etc), transport; the docks, the cruise industry, our multi-racial/ethnic population as a result of this.

12 Local Government & Law Enforcement

SCRIPTURE: First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may live a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved. (1 Timothy 2.1-4)

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God ... the one who is in authority ... does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God. (Romans 13.1, 3-4)

OUTLINE: It doesn't matter whether or not you voted for our city's elected officials. Either way, they still have the power and authority to make a huge difference to the well-being of our city and its individual communities, so they definitely need our prayers. They need us to ask God to guide them in their decision-making so that they exemplify his loving kindness and we need to ask that he would protect their hearts from corruption. We must also pray for the safety and integrity of our police force who put their lives on the line for our security.

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, we thank you for the men and women who serve our City in leadership and law enforcement roles and for their families. Please provide them with reminders each day of the good, true and noble reasons that led them to decide to dedicate their lives to public service, and use that commitment to encourage them and to inspire the decisions that they make and the actions that they take. Amen*

The three MPs for Southampton are Caroline Nokes (Conservative) for Romsey and Southampton North, Royston Smith (Conservative) for Southampton Itchen and Alan Whitehead (Labour) for Southampton Test. We also suggest that you find out the names of your own councillors and, if you can, keep up to date on what matters they are making decisions on. Pray too for all council employees.