



September 2008

Family life and education

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This edition of the prayer guide is devoted to prayer for family life and education.

Family Life

We thank God for:

- His provision of families
- Families who demonstrate God's love
- All organisations and groups that support family life

We pray for:

- All families in crisis, especially those under pressure of finances or ill health. We particularly pray for those at risk of losing their homes.
- Older people, that they would be treated with respect and kindness
- Forgiveness and grace to intervene in every difficult situation
- The Church to represent Jesus to those in great need
- Those who face domestic violence and those who seek to care for them.

Education

We thank God for:

- The many godly principles in our education system
- Staff, students and governors who are committed to seeing that every child receives an outstanding education
- For those schools and colleges that continue to produce excellent results and well-rounded students.

- For those institutions that have improved the services to young people
- For JAS clubs and Prayer Rooms in Schools. For the Prayer Room at Alderman Blaxill School during the week beginning 22nd September.

We pray for:

- A passion to see that every student fulfils their potential
- All staff and students who are starting school or have moved to a new school, that this transition would be an opportunity to become more rooted in Christ.
- CYO, Collective and other organisations as they build relationships with young people and lead them to Jesus.
- Collective as they go into St Benedict's College (29 Sept - 3rd Oct), Colchester Royal Grammar School (6 - 10 Oct) and Stanway School (20 - 24 Oct)
- Those students who have been excluded from school
- All those with special educational and other needs, that they would be treated with compassion and dignity
- Colchester Institute, Sixth forms and University students.

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

Malachi 4: 5 - 6

Prayer Breakfast:

Saturday 7th September 2008
St Stephen's, Canterbury Road
8.30 am - 10 am

Through the Gateway - Knife Crime

Many of us are familiar with the story of the starfish, how one man saves individual starfish when thousands are stranded on the beach. When asked by a passerby how he could make a difference, the man looks at the starfish in his hand saying "Well, it makes a difference to that one!"

In June Lewis Hayward and Alex Young were convicted of the murder of Helen Maughan, in Colchester. The judge, Mr Justice Bean, condemned the drinking culture: "A 16-year-old drunken lout is sadly all too familiar in this court but I am old-fashioned enough to find it shocking that a 13-year-old has money to buy alcohol and roam the streets of Colchester." Hayward's barrister, John Dodd QC, said: "This is a case of a child who lost his way and was expelled from school. He wandered the streets of Colchester drinking cheap alcohol and getting into the wrong company." *BBC website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7463525.stm>*

We can pray for individuals – and will continue to do so – but there is a more far-reaching problem. Looking further a-field, there have been well-publicised knife crimes in some of our cities and a growing awareness that more young people are carrying knives for self-protection. The Independent Magazine quotes John (aged 17), "I think the younger generation needs someone to look up to. There's no proper, key role models – it's all about role models... They (the Government) need to make the younger generation feel more safe."

The Independent continues "His thoughts are echoed by Camilla (Batmanghelidj), who founded

the Kids Company in south London, an organization that so far has helped 12,000 children. "Children who learn violence within the intimacies of their family home enter the criminal network quickly..." Batmanghelidj's reasoning is that if you grow up in a dangerous environment where your parents aren't protecting you, and if you see that the authorities are not coming to your aid, then the conclusion is that human life is not worth living. "

Some young people feel they have to protect themselves because their families and society cannot. Prison may not be a threat; it's inevitable, and for some, even welcome.

What is God saying? First, I think he is asking us to pray for a change in our culture.

Tony Campolo says, "At some particular point, we have to say, "Let's change the system." That's where the evangelical community gets angry. They don't want to change the system. Let me put it this way. We're Good Samaritans. You know the story of the Good Samaritan. The guy going from Jericho to Jerusalem gets mugged and left for dead. And the Good Samaritan comes along and rescues him. That's what we're good at. But if somebody gets mugged the next day, and two people get mugged the day after that, and five the day after that, there comes a point at which we have to say, "Maybe, instead of just picking up the casualties, we need to put in a lighting system and we need to have police patrolling this road. We need to change the system so that people don't get mugged anymore." We're good at picking up the victims of mugging. We're not good at changing the system that produces mugging."

This is going to need courage, and some re-positioning of some of our thoughts and actions, so we can focus differently on how to help.

Second, we pray to God for changed hearts. There have been a couple of fantastic articles in the Evening Gazette recently about how God changes people when they encounter His love. Malachi 4: 5 – 6 talks about the hearts of family members turning to each other. I don't fully understand what this means, but I do know that we will see a big change in our society when we see a change in how family members relate to each other. Malachi is a sign, a message from God, and many of us are hearing this message more urgently as we see the need for people to discover the hope that is Jesus.

Marie

United prayer meetings for our town will take place on Monday mornings at Plume Avenue from September.

More details to follow.

Developing a Healing Ministry

Saturday 13th September 2008

Speaker: Rev Anthony Rose.

Hosts: St Luke's Church.

Tel: 01206 851933 for details

To contribute to next month's prayer guide contact Marie Morris at:

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The contributors views are their own and do not necessarily express those of the editors.