

Thy Kingdom Come in Shropshire



In December 2016, Mark Rylands, Bishop of Shrewsbury, called together a small ecumenical team to consider how we might best utilize the Thy Kingdom Come prayer initiative in Shropshire. Some of our group went to the launch of Thy Kingdom Come in Lambeth and returned with samples of material available which the team publicized at every available opportunity, in particular through local Churches Together groups.

A desire emerged to see the county saturated in prayer during this period through a variety of events crisscrossing the county. In particular we tried to make use of our hills as natural vantage points from which we could proclaim God's saving love and grace across our communities. For those who couldn't manage a hill there were other opportunities to engage with Thy Kingdom Come Shropshire. So 'Look to the Hills' was born.

On a glorious May evening we celebrated Ascension Day by climbing The Wrekin, just outside Telford. About 50 of us gathered to pray, stimulated by clear views over the whole of the county and beyond. The next day we were on Lilleshall Hill with its views into North Shropshire and on Saturday we returned to The Wrekin for a family picnic and prayer with Bishop Mark. We had Messy Church at the summit and a Land Rover drove very close to the top for those unable to make the climb.

In complete contrast, thick mist prevailed on the Bank Holiday Monday as around 50 folk gathered on Caer Caradoc with Alistair Magowan, Bishop of Ludlow, while others met to pray in the Catholic Church in Church Stretton. We also prayed on the Hill Fort just outside Oswestry, Clee Hill in south east Shropshire and Nescliffe and Lyth Hill, both close to Shrewsbury, which included another prayer picnic for families.

Creative alternatives to hill walking included a Prayer Fete in the Rectory garden in Bridgnorth, with prayer stations and information provided by the churches and Christian charities active in the town. In Market Drayton a prayer trail ran throughout the period of Thy Kingdom Come and concluded with an open air service on Pentecost Sunday. Prayer stations were placed around the town and in the villages. People were encouraged to take a knitted dove as a reminder of the presence of the Holy Spirit. In north Shropshire, Whitchurch hosted a prayer trail, with prayer stations based around the Lord's Prayer in each of the churches and a route taking pray-ers along the High Street, encouraging them to pause and pray.

The prayer walks on the hills attracted a wide range of people from many different Christian traditions and included holiday-makers from as far afield as Cumbria and Ipswich! It was a great encouragement to see people travel from different parts of Shropshire to pray for their county. It was wonderful to experience the strong sense of unity and shared purpose in all the gatherings.

So was Shropshire saturated in prayer? We believe it was!

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