

Pause

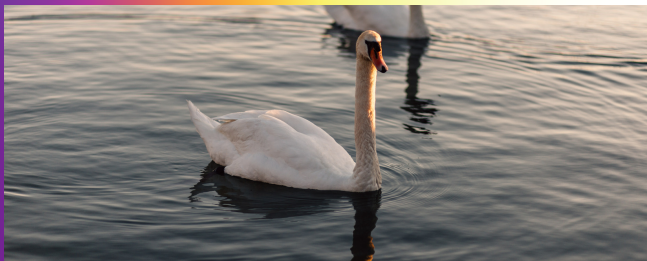


PRAY



Next steps

Praying our Vision
A 28-day devotional



Walton-on-Thames
St Mary's and St John's

NEXT STEPS

Choose life

Step out in faith

Together we can change our corner of the world.

Our Vision is active and dynamic.

What are your next steps going to be?

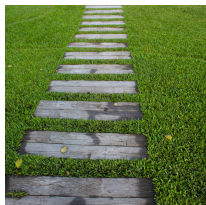
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This is a devotional book. Prayer is foundational to our whole lives as Christians and as a church.

You can use this book at any time. You will need a Bible with a contents page as we will jump around.

Pause, read, pray,
and think about your next
steps each day.





CONTENTS:

- Introduction - Next Steps
- Part One - Deeper Faith In Christ
- Part Two - Welcome and Belonging
- Part Three - Shining God's Light

INTRODUCTION:

Taking our next steps...

Our Vision is about taking our next steps in faith. How exciting to pray about what those might be for us. God is longing to help us grow closer to him and be more courageous in our prayers and actions. As a church we also want to listen to what God is saying and be obedient to his word. May God bless us.

Cathy and Jonny

Day 1

GOD IS NUMBER 1

Pause

Read: Matthew 22:34-40



Every day can have many things battling for our time and attention. Today, take a moment to pause and think about God, the one who gave us the very breath we breathe and the whole universe. Be thankful for life and love, for this day as a gift. Let us consider the ways in which we do live as if God was number one and the ways in which that's not the case.

PRAY Oh God, giver of life, thank you for the signs of life around me. Help me to put you first in my life.
Amen

Next Steps: Try to be aware of God around us.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."
Matthew 22:37-39

Day 2

LOVE OTHER PEOPLE

Pause

Read: Matthew 22:34-40



Taking time to think of the needs of others helps us not to become so obsessed with ourselves.

Thinking about others, praying for them, saying something encouraging or doing a thoughtful thing or giving a present can make their day. Even small things bring joy to others. And the amazing thing is that we find great joy in generous, unconditional giving.

PRAY Lord, please be close to my family, friends, colleagues and those I see each day, but don't really know. Amen

And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-38

Next Steps:

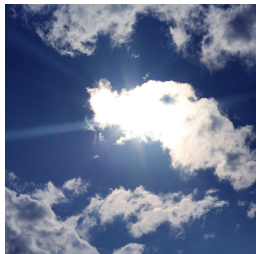
What can you do for someone today?

Day 3

PRAY AND LOOK

Pause

Read: Genesis 28:10-17



Prayer can sound a scary thing, but it is simply us communicating with God, our heavenly Father. Prayer is pausing long enough to see the goodness, wonder and beauty around you. Today, stop before you go out and see the things that shape and fill your life. Make time to see the signs of God's presence in the world around you and the people you encounter today.

PRAY Heavenly Father,
I long to see the
wonder of your love,
help me to see you in
the everyday things of
my life. Amen

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it'. And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is the gate of heaven', Genesis 28:16

Next Steps:
Where do you see God's presence?

Day 4

PRAY AND WAIT

Pause

Read: 1 Samuel 1:9-17



"Pray until you pray" says AW Tozer. Prayer is not just a shopping list of things we want God to do. It is sharing the cries of our own hearts and the hearts of others, trusting God will hear us and knows how best to answer. We wait for him and in the waiting we are open to hear his voice in the stillness. In this place we discover what God is longing to give us and to do in the world.

PRAY Father, I share with you now, the cries of my heart. I know that you hear and will answer in the best way. Amen

Hannah was praying silently, only her lips were moving, so Eli, the priest, thought she was drunk... Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am deeply troubled, I have been pouring out my soul.' 1 Samuel 1:9-17

Next Steps:

Can I wait on God for 5 minutes today?

Day 5

CHILDREN

Pause

Read: Mark 10:13-16



Children are as much a part of our church vision as adults. In fact, they can teach us so much about learning, growing, trusting and being open to new things. In Jesus' day, children were the very lowest in society and Jesus took the trouble to speak to them, include them and value them. What can the children we see in our town teach us about the Kingdom of God?

PRAY Lord Jesus, thank you for the children in our lives. Help us to trust you more and be ready to share our faith with them. Amen

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'
Mark 10:14

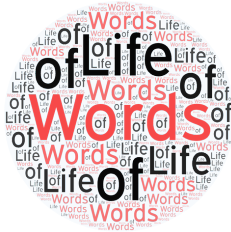
Next Steps:
Are there children you could pray for?

Day 6

LIFE

Pause

Read: John 6:61-63



We make every day about small things and big things, some affect us and some affect others too. Jesus never forced himself on people, but his disciples freely chose to follow him. We also have to make that choice for ourselves. Jesus lays out his offer for those who believe: of life in all its fullness and the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us. Nothing compares with that!

PRAY Spirit of God, thank you that you have come to give us life in all its fullness. Help me to receive your life and bring life to others. Amen

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are full of the Spirit and life.
John 6:63

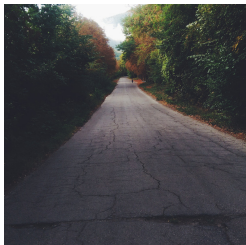
Next Steps:
To whom can I offer words of life today?

Day 7

REAL LIFE

Pause

Read: John 6: 64-69



Following Jesus is not an easy road. Even when he was a living man right in front of them, some people did not want to accept his words and believe in him. Take a moment to ponder on the wonder of the incarnation, Jesus living on this earth, and tell him how you feel about his words which give you eternal life. What does it look like for you to take your next steps with Jesus?

PRAY Lord Jesus, thank you that you walked this road with us, help me to believe in you with all my heart and to follow you. Amen

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."
John 6:68-69

Next Steps:
What is your next step to live differently?

PART ONE

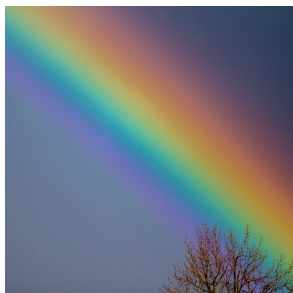
Deeper Faith in Christ

In discerning the Vision, there were several powerful contributions including:

Wanting to follow Jesus and plant our footsteps in his, just as the hymn [O Jesus I have Promised](#) says. Having a desire to put Jesus to be at the centre of our lives, as the song [Jesus be the Centre](#) says as well as the children's song [Every move I make I make in you, Jesus](#).

God is awesome in his glory and our Vision is that we would love God more and have a deeper longing for him (see Psalm 63:1) and his beautiful refining work in our lives.

The image of the rainbow speaks of the variety of different ways we prefer to worship in our church and the beauty when we are all together, not of a dull blur but of separate beautiful and complementary colours.

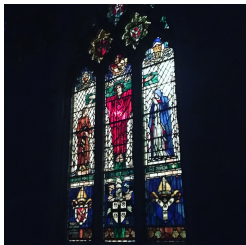


Day 8

ACCESSIBLE WORSHIP

Pause

Read: Psalm 27:4-8



From the beginning of civilisation, people have had an inbuilt longing to worship. Many different gods and things are worshipped, but our hearts were created to worship God and they do not find peace until they rest in God. Sadly, our hearts still run after other things. It takes effort to worship God. It is wonderful to worship together in church and to worship God with our whole lives.

PRAY Almighty God, I worship you today. Please give me a heart that seeks you and discipline to pursue you. Amen

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
upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.
Psalm 27:4

Next Steps:
Where can you see God today?

Day 9

SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP

Pause

Read: Ephesians 5:15-20



Recognising the presence of God is not always easy and yet he is probably closer than we think much of the time. The Holy Spirit helps us in our prayers, our understanding of Scripture and in our worship. We can feel especially close to God in a service of worship, through silence, liturgy and singing. Coming expectantly to worship, will help us to meet with God.

PRAY Father, thank you that you want us to worship you in Spirit and in truth. Please help me to worship you as you deserve. Amen

Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to each other with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
Ephesians 5:19

Next Steps:
How could you be more expectant?

Day 10

EVERYDAY DISCIPLESHIP

Pause

Read: Psalm 63



Discipleship is about growing in faith, a bit like a plant grows each day: it's often hidden, but will really happen given the right conditions. Do we have a longing to meet with God? In this psalm, we are invited to think about a very dry place and imagine how desperate we might be for water. This is how the writer longs for God. Plants need water and we need to seek God to grow.

PRAY Lord, help me each day to seek you and to grow more desperate to meet with you. Amen

You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you; I thirst for
you, my whole being longs for
you. In a dry and parched land
where there is no water.
Psalm 63:1

Next Steps:
In what way will you meet with God today?

Day 11

FOLLOW ME

Pause

Read: Matthew 4:18-22



In Jesus' time, people literally followed their preferred Rabbi around. It was considered a blessing to have the dust off his feet cover you because you followed him so closely. Disciples are simply learners and followers. Jesus called James and John and they left the boat and followed him. Have you metaphorically left your boat? What does it mean for you to follow Jesus?

PRAY Jesus, help me to respond when you call to me. Help me to be ready to leave things to follow you today. Amen

James and John were in a boat with their father, Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Matthew 4:21-22

Next Steps:
What do you need to leave?

Day 12

WALK HUMBLY

Pause

Read: Micah 6:6-8



Christians don't get a day off! We are disciples 24/7, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Following Jesus affects everything we think about, say and do in our lives. One song says "They will know we are Christians by our love". I hope people around us can see it. Here is a great summary of life as a Christian "Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God".

PRAY Father, help me to love the world as you do, to love justice as you do and to be as merciful as you are. Amen

He has shown you, people, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8

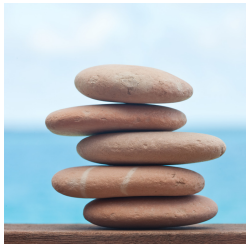
Next Steps:
How can you walk humbly today?

Day 13

CONFIDENT IN MY FAITH

Pause

Read: 2 Timothy 1:6-10



How can we be sure of our faith? It is sometimes easier to believe that God loves other people more than ourselves. Someone said "If you were the only person in the world, Jesus would have died just for you." It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the assurance we need. Paul reminds Timothy that God's Spirit gives us courage, power, love and self-discipline. We can be confident in our faith.

PRAY Lord, thank you that you know all my moments of faith and doubt and you still love me. May your Spirit help me. Amen

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline... He has saved us and called us to a holy life.
2 Timothy 1:7,9

Next Steps:
Thank God that Jesus died for you.

Day 14

DEEPER FAITH NEXT STEP

Pause

Read: Matthew 2:1-12



Faith is not a leap in the dark, it is a choice to follow a light, however bright or flickering it is. Christian faith is choosing a life that is shaped by the story and person of Jesus Christ. This choice may be quick or may take a long journey of searching like the Magi. "Hope is the music of tomorrow; faith is to dance to that music today". Faith is the gift that helps us take our next step.

PRAY Father, I pray for myself and those close to me: please kindle that spark of faith in us that we may daily grow closer to you. Amen

They went on their way and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was... and they were overjoyed.

Matthew 2:9-10

Next Steps:
What is your next step to deeper faith?

PART TWO

WELCOME AND BELONGING

There are two aspects to this section:

- Taking responsibility for living our own lives as Christians and giving our whole lives to God;
- Seeking to build our church into an interdependent community of God's people where all are welcomed and we all belong.

Living as 24/7 Christians every day of the week has implications for the way we treat other people, care for one another in the body of Christ, how we regard our time, talents and money. May we seek the guidance of God's Holy Spirit as we ponder this.



Day 15

WELCOME UNRESERVEDLY

Pause

Read: Acts 2:42-47



The picture of the community of the first Christians is beautiful and compelling. They shared what they had and cared spiritually and practically for one another whatever their needs were. No wonder people walked past and said: "I want what they have got!" It is also daunting for us to compare ourselves with them because we value independence so much.

PRAY Lord Jesus, please would you build our church community into a place of sharing and love and start with me. Amen

All the believers were together. They praised God and enjoyed the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
Acts 2:47

Next Steps:
How might your perspective change?

Day 16

CARE COMPASSIONATELY

Pause

Read: Matthew 9:35-38



A stone thrown into a still pool of water, creates ripples from that point outwards which get wider and wider as they go outwards. The way we care for one other person in the church affects not just the two of us, but those around us and wider and wider, so that the whole of Walton-on-Thames can be affected for good. Let us be filled with compassion like Jesus.

PRAY Father, may your love be seen in our relationships with each other in our church so that you may be glorified. Amen

When he saw the crowds, Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
Matthew 9:37

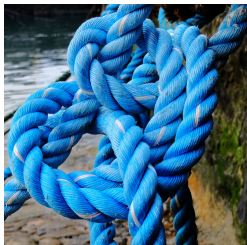
Next Steps:
Who will you care for today?

Day 17

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

Pause

Read: Matthew 6:14-15



Sadly, we all hurt other people at times and others hurt us. This ties our relationships in knots and separates us from God. It's called sin. Sin damages, destroys and imprisons. No other religion offers complete forgiveness as we have in Jesus. Jesus' truth and love, life and death, set us free from the power of sin and give freedom to accept God's gift of forgiveness and to forgive others.

PRAY Father, thank you that you sent Jesus to a cruel death to set me free. Help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Amen

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you.

Matthew 6:14-15

Next Steps:
With whom do you need to make peace?

Day 18

SERVE JOYFULLY

Pause

Read: Romans 12:4-8



As soon as we become Christians, we not only become part of God's family, but also part of the body of Christ world-wide and with it's local expression in our own church. God has designed our life together like a body all intricately entwined, dependent on one another. It is a joy to know that God has given us all gifts to contribute. We can feel so fulfilled using them to serve the church.

PRAY Jesus, Lord of the church, help me to discover and to share freely the gifts you have given me and to help others find theirs. Amen

Christ himself gave gifts to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and become mature.
Ephesians 4:12-13

Next Steps:
Can you help someone else see their gifts?

Day 19

GIVE GENEROUSLY

Pause

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7



Giving money to God is sometimes a hard thing to do, because we allow ourselves to think it belongs to us. In truth, God has given us, life and breath itself. He has also given us true forgiveness and freedom in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we have received that for ourselves and we freely give our whole self back to him. Giving God's money to God's work is a privilege.

PRAY Father, set me free from the hold that money and worries about myself have over me and help me to generously give to God. Amen

I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. They pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.
2 Corinthians 8:3-4

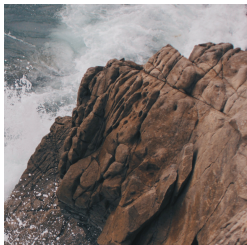
Next Steps:
Find out who the church gives money to.

Day 20

LISTEN AND ACT

Pause

Read: Matthew 7:21-27



Jesus taught his followers how to pray, fast and give and also not to worry. We can read this in Matthew 6. He then tells the story of the two men: one who built his house on the rock and one who built his house on the sand, to emphasise the need not just to listen to what he said, but to actually do something about it. Think about what you have read so far in this booklet.

PRAY Lord, thank you for your patience with us when we are slow to hear. Please help me to act on what you are saying to me. Amen

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. When the storm came it fell with a great crash. Matthew 7:26-27

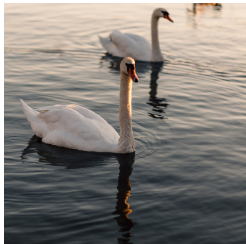
Next Steps:
What will you do about what you have read?

Day 21

WELCOME NEXT STEPS

Pause

Read: John 10:7-10



Choose Life. When God's people were setting out on a journey several centuries before the birth of Jesus, God offered them a choice. The invitation ends with the words: 'Choose life'. Our life is an exciting journey, every day we have an invitation to choose life: seeking to live more fully with others, encouraging them to flourish, accepting the friendship and strength of the Holy Spirit.

PRAY Jesus, may I every day choose life and commit myself to you and be part of the community you are building in our church. Amen

Jesus said: 'The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'
John 10:10

Next Steps:
Review Part Two, what are your next steps?

PART THREE

SHINING GOD'S LIGHT

In discerning the vision, there were several powerful images of the church shining out light all around our town of Walton-on-Thames.

A little china house with a night light inside. The light shines out and you can see it. It is even more visible in the darkness. It is also warm and inviting inside.

Jesus is the light that people need in their darkness. We have the light. We can share it with them.



Day 22

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Pause

Read: Matthew 5:13-16



Jesus said 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life'. Light allows us to see. It dispels darkness and fear. Light is about truth and honesty. What wonderful ways to live. We have that light within us which, with the help of God's spirit enables us to give glory to him. May we share that light with others.

PRAY Father, thank you that you sent Jesus into the world as the light. Help me to experience and shine your light. Amen

Let your shone shine out to people, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
Matthew 5:16

Next Steps:
With whom will you share God's light?

Day 23

PROMOTE THE CHURCH

Pause

Read: Isaiah 60:1-5



Light is such a powerful symbol. The Little house which glows warm and bright when the candle is lit beckons and looks inviting. The light shines out through the windows, but what if there are no windows? Isaiah is predicting the coming of God's Messiah, the Saviour of the world. He will bring light into a dark world. Jesus still brings light into our dark world and people's own darkness.

PRAY Lord God, thank you for the light which takes away our fear and gives us hope and comfort. May your glory shine in my life. Amen

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.
Isaiah 60:1-2

Next Steps:
Where can you see God's light shining?

Day 24

SERVE LOCAL PEOPLE

Pause

Read: Isaiah 61:1-3



Jesus took this passage from Isaiah as his manifesto. He was not going to be the sort of Messiah who came to win battles and rescue the kingdom of Israel from the Romans. He would bring healing, wholeness, freedom for captives of oppression, poverty and injustice. As Christians, we are also called to show practical love to those around us. We are Jesus hands and his feet.

PRAY Father God,
there is so much
injustice in our world,
open my eyes to the
people around me
who I can help for you.
Amen

The Spirit of the sovereign Lord
is on me, because the Lord has
anointed me to proclaim good
news to the poor. He has sent
me to bind up the broken
hearted...
Isaiah 61:1

Next Steps:
How can you show God's love today?

Day 25

WITNESS

Pause

Read: Matthew 9:35-38



“Share the good news of Jesus wherever we are.” Sometimes we think we have to be a very special Christian to be able to share the good news of Jesus with other people. The message for us is that God is with us wherever we are, and he wants us to bring hope and light to the people we see every day – sometimes called our ‘Front line’. We all have a story of God’s goodness to share.

PRAY Lord, Jesus, thank you that you bring good news. Please give me boldness to share what you have done for me. Amen

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness.
Matthew 9:35

Next Steps:
Can you identify your ‘Front Line’?

Day 26

WORLD MISSION PARTNERS

Pause

Read: Matthew 28:16-24



Jesus had a clear vision that all people in the world should have a chance to hear his message of grace. Sadly, there are still parts of the world where the message has not reached, or where people do not have the Bible in their own language and still others where our fellow Christians are persecuted. We want to play our part in the world church, so we give to overseas missions.

PRAY Lord, God, we pray for the mission organisations that we support: Tearfund, Compassion, CPAS, Reach Across. Amen

Jesus said 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all I have told you'.
Matthew 28:19

Next Steps:
Find out more about these Missions.

Day 27

LOCAL MISSION PARTNERS



Pause

Read: Luke 10:1-12

It is an exciting thought that, like the seventy-two, we are asked to take good news where Jesus is about to go. As a church, we want to support those Christian organisations locally who are bring God's love in word and deed to the people who live around us. We may know of those who are lonely, sad, disabled, in pain and in poverty. There are many needs right on our doorstep.

PRAY Father, I pray for the Food bank and all those who have a need to use it this month. Amen

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.
Luke 10:1

Next Steps:
Find out about local deprivation.

Day 28

SHINING LIGHT NEXT STEPS

Pause

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:4-10



Paul is talking about 1st century Corinth, but he could be talking about our own town and work places when he says: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ." We, who follow Christ have been entrusted with treasure to share. Which like valuable items in those days is kept carefully in clay jars.

PRAY Father, please give us courage and confidence to share your love and shine your light, even though we are like clay jars. Amen

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.
2 Corinthians 4:6

Next Steps:
Where will you shine God's light today?

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

WELCOME PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have welcomed us into your kingdom and your heart's desire is to draw every human being to yourself. Grant us clear eyes to see people as you see them, sensitive feet to stand in their shoes, and warm smiles to welcome them in your name.

Give us such generous hearts, that our church becomes a foretaste of heaven where every soul you send us finds their loving home in the community of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
Amen



VISION PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we pray that you will give us a greater vision of who you really are.

We pray that we may be people who are on the move and ready to learn and grow deeper in faith, open to your love and growing closer to your son Jesus.

Make us a community of worshiping people who care for one another, so that people may see and want to know more about you.

Please help us to reach out to those people around us with your immense and unconditional love in word and deed. May we not forget our brothers and sisters in the world who need our help.

In the power of the Holy Spirit we pray.
Amen

Prayer
Faith
Growth
Witness
Compassion
Joy
Generosity



LORDS PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, when they asked him how they should pray.

Our Father

in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our

daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen



Taking our next steps towards:

Deeper faith in Christ

- Accessible, spirit-filled worship
- Everyday discipleship
- Confidence in personal faith

Welcome and Belonging

- Welcome unreservedly
- Care compassionately
- Forgive wholeheartedly
- Serve joyfully
- Give generously

Shining God's Light

- Promote the church in Walton-on-Thames
- Serve local people with practical and spiritual help
- Share the good news of Jesus wherever we are
- Engage in overseas Christian mission

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Matthew 22:37-39



WaltonParish



wotparish



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