

The Power of Prayer

In May 1940 the Second World War looked soon to be lost by the Allies. Our troops were trapped between the sea at Dunkirk and the advancing Nazi army, and mass slaughter seemed inevitable. On 23rd May the despairing King George VI broadcast a national call to prayer, and the nation responded: you can still see grainy black and white photos of queues of people on Sunday, 26th May outside cathedrals, churches and chapels, gathering to pray for a miracle.

A flotilla of boats set sail in the hope that 30,000 people, around 10% of the forces, might be rescued. Storms came out of nowhere and battered Europe so violently that the Luftwaffe were unable to take off. Meanwhile, in a decision which his generals at the time violently opposed, Hitler had ordered his advancing ground forces to halt. The English Channel later became as calm as a millpond, in spite of the nearby storms, with the boats carrying a total of 338,000 men to safety: British, French, Belgian, Dutch and Polish.

Coincidence? Or a dramatic answer to a nation's prayers? Churchill and the King obviously thought the latter, as a national day of thanksgiving was called, two weeks after the day of prayer, to give thanks to God for what Churchill called 'The Miracle of Dunkirk'.

In the Church today we have become very used to the idea that prayer is where we align our wills to that of God, that we change, rather than our circumstances. There is truth in this, but the other side is that the Bible and history are full of examples of God changing situations, not just people.

Our diocese needs the fuel of prayer if we really are to see lives transformed. We need the kind of desperate, expectant, faith which sees God actually doing things in our world. One way in which that is happening in our diocese is through our own praying community, the Community of St Hugh, which is to be formally launched on Saturday, 28th September. But wherever we are, let's cry out to God to make a difference, not just in our lives, but in the lives of those for whom we pray.

*If you would like to know more about the Community of St Hugh, please contact John Leach via email (john.leach@lincoln.anglican.org) or by calling 01522 50 40 49. You can read more about what came to be called 'The Miracle of Dunkirk' in Pete Greig's book, *How to Pray* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2019).*

