



Friday Fellowship News No 21 11 September

LEANING INTO GOD!

THE other day I uploaded to St Denys Facebook Page a video from Simon Ponsonby encouraging us to spend more time with God in prayer and Bible study.

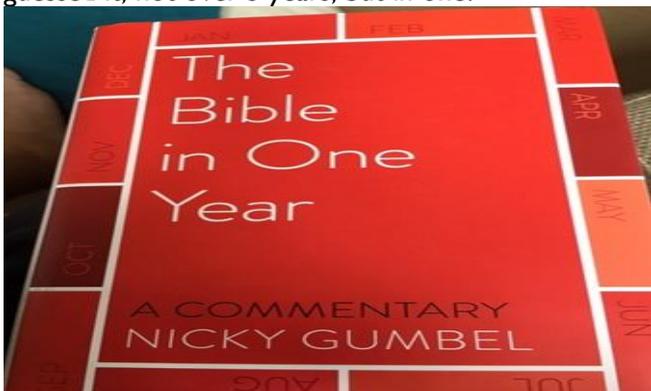
'But how?', some of you may have been asking!

I'd like to offer two very practical guides to help, because they encourage us to read the Bible daily, and offer prayer suggestions.

Every week in FFNews, I share the CofE Lectionary readings for the week ahead (*they are designed to cover the whole Bible in 3 years*). This week we've created them as a separate document for the week.

'**Reflections for Daily Prayer**', published by Church House Publishing every year is a great resource. Each day, it gives you the readings for Morning Prayer, a short commentary on one of the readings with often thought-provoking comments by a cross-spectrum of Christians leaders (lay and ordained) and a prayer. This costs £16.99 (4p per day). It runs from Advent (December ish) each year.

The second resource is a new one from Holy Trinity Brompton (Alpha Course Church) which for many years, has produced a '**Bible In One Year**' BIOY App, with daily set readings to cover the whole Bible - you've guessed it, not over 3 years, but in one!



The App (Free) has an audio section where you can hear people read all 3 Bible readings set for the day, and then usually Nicky Gumbel gives a thought.

But, tis new book now has a commentary/reflection on ALL three readings of the day. So, for example, you could read the Psalm and commentary in the morning, the Old Testament passage and commentary at lunchtime, and the New Testament passage and commentary at the end of the day. This new book is £17.99 or £12.99 on Kindle.

Another way some people find useful to lean more into God through studying the Bible is to pick one of the 66 books of the Bible, reading short passages alongside a good Bible commentary, written by someone who has researched that aspect of the Bible's teaching/author/timeline etc.

The resources to do this are limitless, though if starting out, you may find looking into a New Testament Letter from St Paul, or a Gospel, first the most helpful.

I'd be delighted to make suggestions of commentaries to you. Almost all commentaries now you can get Second Hand for around £3, so you can build up your own little library and of course, online there are lots of good stuff - plus plenty of heretical contributions. I'd be happy to advise!

The key thing is NOT to try to do too much. I, like many Christians, have often set myself a study project which got off well but then work/family commitments developed and so I dropped back. Always best to start slowly - like through Reflections for Daily Prayer, or Bible Reading Notes from Bible Society, Scripture Union, CWR or others I referred to in FFNews over the summer.

RIDE AND STRIDE

THE Oxford Historic Churches Trust **Ride and Stride** is tomorrow. If you'd like to sponsor Jeanette Gill, please put sponsorship money in an envelope and put it through the letterbox at **5 Chapel Road**. Connie is also walking to Hatford (and possibly Charney!!) with Peter, whilst Jeanette cycles around deanery churches.

THE BIG CHURCH READ

A PASTOR in the United States is encouraging his church to take part in what is called 'The Big Church Read' on September 20. See <https://thebigchurchread.co.uk/> for full details.

The idea is they will go through a book he's written called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, by John Mark Comer. I've recently finished it, and can highly commend it to you. Some of the lessons from that book, along with others I've read over the summer I shall be unpacking over this autumn and winter. With the church family still dispersed due to Covid, I am keen to build on our second Deeper Value, '**Deeper Into Fellowship**', even though many of us cannot meet in person as we used to.

I think that we can do that actually through our First Value, '**Deeper Into God**', and through ways in which at different times of the day, or week, we can unite, even from our own homes, by praying or reading the same things, and times of waiting on God, plus, through united Zoom sessions.

I know a number of people have really been helped by uniting with others through saying Morning Prayer, and using the CofE Lectionary Bible readings each day – which of course links us not just with church members, but with Christians across the UK – indeed the Anglican Communion!

I am in the process of putting together a resource which we can all use at home, twice a day: so, for example, Morning Prayer and Midday Prayer. Or Midday Prayer and Evening Prayer or Compline, or, a mix of any two to fit your home/work/life pattern.

Over the past five years or so I've been amazed at how churches across the spectrum, from Anglo Catholic to evangelical, to middle of the road Anglican to Charismatic have all started to rediscover the ancient spiritual disciplines of what has, possibly, unhelpfully, been called the '**Daily Office**' (*Morning/Midday/Evening Prayer & Compline for examples*). The basic premise, though, of the Daily Office is simple: **we need to intentionally stop to be with God more than once a day so that practicing the presence of God becomes real in our lives!**

The point of Christianity is not to be in a club which has fellowship for members on Sunday but, to be followers of Christ and to seek, day by day, to become more like Christ - and to want to encourage others to be more like him (disciples) too.

We cannot do that simply by attending a Sunday service: we each need daily more spiritual food, resources and relationship with god for that to happen.

More to follow this autumn.

5 MARKS OF MISSION

AS we start to come out of lockdown – at least in some ways – the Bishop of Oxford has encouraged every

church to pray and think through what lessons have been learned over the past five or so month?.

What things we had to stop did we really miss – and why? Are there things which having stopped, which might not need to be re-started - as the original need for it no longer exists?

This year, the PCC was going to prayerfully work with the congregation on '**Why**' Review. A stepping back from the day to day life and ministry and activities of the church, and to ask afresh 'why' we do the activities and for whom they are intended?

If the why is still relevant, is what we are doing really meeting that need or, might we need to consider how things might be changed or adapted?

As with any voluntary organisation, the work and ministry is often, largely, carried out by around 20-25% of the membership – for all sorts of practical reasons (including full-time jobs, family commitments and health) – so that's not a negative point).

However, as far as a Church is concerned, two Key Questions we must always ask are: 'In what sense is this activity aimed at seeking to bring about the Kingdom of God, and/or, How are we giving people an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel and become disciples of Jesus?

That 'Why Review' will now take place in 2021, but one of the tools the Bishop has suggested we reflect on is how much of our energy and efforts are spent on the 5 Marks of Mission, as defined by the Anglican Communion, and adopted in 1984.

The Five Marks of Mission are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

May I encourage you to pray about this and if you'd like to share any thoughts, please do email me.

Health Update

Just a brief note to say I wasn't in church last Sunday, nor shall I be this coming Sunday. Ahead of my surgeon appointment on Oct 1, my GP has started me on a new slow-release Morphine tablet which for the first few hours of the day makes me feel sick/giddy. Like with all new medicines, our bodies take time to adjust – and mine is to this one but I'm making good progress and I think I shall be fine for 20 September. In the meantime, I'm 100% vicaring in other ways so feel free to contact me at any time.

With my love and prayers:

Revd Paul Eddy, Vicar, T: 01367 710267

E: vicar@stdenys.org