

Some thoughts to start...

Engaging in the practice of faith is not always easy. For some people, sitting down and having an open, in-depth chat with God is not difficult. For many of us, however, it is.

What we're trying to do here is to give people a resource – to help them in their thinking about scripture, and in the practice of personal prayer.

Everything written here is simply a *suggestion*. If you find other practices more helpful, please use them!

Find a bible and head to a place you won't be disturbed. Take a few moments to sit quietly. In that quiet moment you might want to say to God, "What would you like me to hear today?"

Read each of the scriptures. Some people prefer to read silently, while others find it more helpful to read out loud. Take a few moments to reflect on what you've heard. (If you would like, the 'reflection' section is there to help start you off.)

Finally, take a few moments to talk with God. The printed prayer is there as a guide, but there may be other things you want to share. Chat, as openly and honestly as you can. Then, through the day, listen for God's response.

This resource was initiated by St. Andrew's Haney United Church, Maple Ridge, BC.

The suggested scripture readings are based on the Consultation on Common Text's *Daily Lectionary*.

If you'd like to share some thoughts about what you've read, head over to the 'chat space' at www.standrewsuc.com

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

22165 Dewdney Trunk Road
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 3H7

Phone: 604.463.9611
Email: standrewshaneyuc@telus.net
Web: standrewsuc.com

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(November 12th to 17th, 2007)

WRITER FOR THIS WEEK:
Rev. Dr. A.H. HARRY OSSOREN
Executive Minister of
the General Council's
Congregational, Educational,
and Community Ministries Unit

United Church House
Toronto, Ontario

Monday

Scripture:

- Haggai 2:10-19
- Psalm 98
- 2 Peter 1:16-21

Reflection:

Place is important in these three texts: the temple to be rebuilt as a place of blessing; creation to be enjoyed as sign of God's powerful presence; the mountain of transfiguration as setting to reveal Christ's glory.

I sense within the writers of these passages a great readiness to apprehend the presence of God in widely diverse locations. Their eyes, ears, minds, and hearts are attuned to perceiving God's traces and wonders in the realities they inhabit.

For us bombarded as we are with so many stimuli of human making, it is a huge challenge to penetrate through to the divine and holy. We are usually left on the surface oblivious to the depth that undergirds our being and doing. It takes time and focussing to go below and above!

Prayer:

Jesus, our companion and friend, mentor us in the way of discerning the reign of God in our midst. Forgive our preference for the easy distractions and simple solutions, when you are calling us to the depths and the heights of Holy presence. Grant us grace to see, to hear, to feel, to taste, to understand, and to apprehend You wherever we may be.

Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Haggai 2:20-23
- Psalm 98
- 2 John 1-13

Reflection:

Disagreement and conflict are part of the Haggai and John texts. The Bible is very realistic about the troubles and tribulations of the faith community. We often have unrealistic expectations about peace in the church.

Peace comes not by sweeping discord under the carpet; nor by imposing the "right ways and beliefs" on others. Something of our freedom and our personhood is lost when differences are suppressed or hidden.

Peace comes when we can acknowledge that God is larger than my thoughts or yours, and that we are invited by the Omniscient One to continue engaging each other, exploring together, and discovering Truth that is larger than anything we might have imagined.

Presumed "kings" and "emperors" of knowledge, power, money – of whatever domain are brought low, when they disdain and usurp the Holy One who is the source and giver of all.

Prayer:

I bless you, Creator, for the gift of my life and for the earth our beautiful home; for the blessing of Truth which takes more than a lifetime to comprehend; for the grace of companions and partners on the Way to challenge and enrich us. May my life reveal your image to all whom I encounter this day.

Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Zechariah 8:1-17
- Psalm 98
- John 5:19-29

Reflection:

At the voice of God, a destroyed city and society will be renewed and the dead shall come to life. Easter is witnessed to not just by the resurrection of Jesus, but by various texts in scripture that point to God's transformative power.

The question for people of faith is not whether we believe in "the resurrection." Rather it is the more foundational question: do you believe in God? Do you believe in the God who can change deserts into fertile fields, destroyed cities into civil and peaceful societies, museum-like churches into vibrant communities in mission, and lifeless people into witnesses to joy and hope?

The God revealed in Jesus Christ calls us to escape death by embracing life borne of self-giving love. Listen! Can you hear the voice?

Prayer:

You keep calling and in awesome moments of grace we actually hear you. Please do not give up on us! We yearn for nothing more than to live life – the life you initiate and sustain – to the full. Bless all the voices that speak your word and reveal your boundless love. We pray trusting your mother-love as Jesus taught, Our Father....

Today I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 57:14-21
- Isaiah 12
- Romans 1:18-25

Reflection:

Anger, judgement, wrath...of God! These attributes of the Holy One may be hard for us to square with the core sentence: "God is love."

And yet, would we want anything to do with a God who doesn't rail against the murder of children and other innocents, who doesn't rage against the destruction of Creation, who is apathetic about the unjust distribution of wealth in a world where some are fabulously rich and most are oppressed by poverty.

The Bible gives many instances of God's anger. Too often I think these are human projections. I feel righteous rage and assume God would enact it as I am inclined to do. Somewhere I haven't quite grasped the way of Jesus: self-giving love that accepts, transforms, and makes new.

I hope that God's judgement upon my sorry self will sound something like this:

I condemn you to be loved by Me forever!

Prayer:

Judge me, O God, not to destroy, I pray, but to fulfill the dream you have for me: life in all its fullness. Free me from the need to judge and condemn others, so that we may together discover your grace revealed in Christ in whom we live and have our being. We bless you.

Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Friday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 59:1-15a
- Isaiah 12
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12

Reflection:

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." (Is. 12:2)

It isn't easy in our society to proclaim this conviction. We are told regularly that our salvation lies in buying the right things, in associating with the right people, in living in the right neighbourhood, in having the right electronic toys, etc. The fact that virtually all of this pressure to consume brings profit and wealth to the vendors of all these status symbols should not be lost on us.

Another Isaiah passage speaks Gospel to a consumptive world: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and you labour for that which does not satisfy?" (Is. 55:1-2)

People of faith have long realized that salvation comes from "beyond" and "above." At our best, we actually do trust in this God and leave fear aside.

Prayer:

Teach me the way of Jesus, O God. When I want more, teach me to fast. When temptations block the path of truth and justice, open to me the ways of faithfulness. When my mind is full of myself, teach me to pray. When my heart is cold, warm it with your heartbeat. Holy Spirit, breathe anew in me and in your world.

Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Haggai 1.1-15a
- Psalm 145.1-5, 17-21
- Luke 20.1-8

Reflection:

"The kingdom [reign] of God is among you."

I often find it hard to believe this central statement and conviction expressed by Jesus. God's reign is not confirmed by what is being reported in the media; nor will web data substantiate whether God reigns or not. In fact communicators present overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

But people of faith look beyond these tsunamis of information. They know deeply that all creation is enfolded in the powerful love of God which sustains and renews life, and prepares seasons of germination and harvest. With eyes that "see" beyond the obvious, they recognize the signs, symbols, and sacraments that witness to the reign of God.

Prayer:

As I anticipate the Sabbath gathering of your people, deepen in me the peace that goes beyond understanding, the thirst that is only quenched by living waters, the hunger that seeks enough for all people, and the love begins with my neighbour. Immersed in your baptismal grace, I claim to be your child and a sibling of Jesus Christ.

Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love
In Christ's name I pray.