

## 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 and their minister, the Rev. Richard Bott.**

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

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### ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

## Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

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## Monday

### Scripture:

- Judges 6:11-24
- Psalm 27:7-14
- Ephesians 5:6-16

### Reflection:

The Bible is full of stories of people being called to use their God-given gifts to change the world they live in. Here Gideon, another one of those hesitant and self-excusing leaders in the tradition of Moses, is called to lead the rebellion against oppressive power of Midianites. Not a pretty story. But a story of liberation by God using the courage and faith of a person open to the miracles of God.

I like better the text in Ephesians:

"Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true." (Eph. 5:8b & 9)

Through these words, the Spirit calls us to use our gifts not for unfruitful works that cause harm and shame. Instead, we are called to figure out what "is pleasing" to God – not in an ingratiating – read "boot-licking" – way. The Spirit invites us to align ourselves with the heart of God. The heart and soul of God radiates nothing but love – self-giving love recognized as Jesus' Way.

God keeps calling – you and me!

### Prayer:

Spirit of Christ, persist in raising your voice to us, so that amid the din and clamour of our times we may not fail to hear and see you persistently calling us. We thank you for the many who do respond to your call to serve courageously and at great risk to welcome your reign on earth now, as it is in heaven. Let the fruit of your light be seen in their faithfulness and in our discipleship. We pray in Christ.

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:

- Judges 7:12-22
- Psalm 27:7-14
- Philippians 2:12-18

### Reflection:

Gideon's story continues with the message to people of faith that victory is not simply our doing, but God working through people causing miraculous victories to happen as they and others are liberated from oppression. Salvation is always a gift of God.

Philippians picks up this theme reminding us that

"...it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for [God's] good pleasure."

In our time that's hard to credit. We are much more likely to feel that we have to do "it" on our own. Self-reliance is the mantra of those who take Protestantism's individualism to extremes. They want as little to do with communal sharing and mutual caring as possible. The Gospel's "love one another as I have loved you" is too often foreign territory to the libertarian way.

"God ...at work in you" always implies community (between God and me) and sharing (neighbour and me). It is the Trinitarian way of community and mutual upbuilding, love for the other. Christians recognize the sign of God's active presence: overflowing self-giving. May there be an abundance of this sign, causing joy-filled, grateful hearts.

### Prayer:

Work your miracles we pray, O God, through us and others, who open themselves to your creative love and amazing grace. Free us from need for recognition and credit. Teach us Jesus' self-giving Ways that in losing our selves, we may discover life in its fullness.

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:

- Genesis 49:1-2, 8-13, 21-26
- Psalm 27:7-14
- Luke 1:67-79

### Reflection:

Jacob, in the Genesis reading, blesses his sons. There is something poignant about a patriarch's last words. Even more than a written last will, a parent's last words will ring in the ears and hearts of the siblings for the rest of their lives. They will seek to fulfill their blessing or to react against it. The subsequent history of Israel is something of a commentary on this complex testament.

On the other hand, Zechariah's prophecy in Luke's gospel is triggered by an only son – the infant John, known subsequently as the Baptizer. The child is commissioned with the task of preparing the way for the long-awaited One. John is not the light, but gives knowledge of the salvation to be brought, and, to reveal the Light to those dwelling in the shadow of death.

What is your and my life about? Truly being ourselves, whose voice will determine our way of being?

### Prayer:

Day in and day out, I pray, Mother and Father of us all, that I may know your call to be my true self; that I may discern your life-giving Way; that I may discern the faithful companions who share bread and wine for the journey; that we may find our way home and our peace in you, the Source and Fulfilment of all life. Praise be to you, through Jesus the Christ.

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:

- Exodus 6:2-9
- Psalm 2
- Hebrews 8:1-7

### Reflection:

Rulers of the peoples, pay attention! God is not impressed with your power – particularly if you use it for self-aggrandizement, for self-interest, for fostering injustice and tyranny.

It has always startled me how many presidents, kings, dictators, and first ministers seem to believe that gaining power is meant to enlarge their bank accounts, strengthen their control, acquire prestige and status.

These tin pot leaders betray their people and the trust conferred on them, like Pharaoh are held in derision by God. Far from ruling by 'divine right,' they breach the covenant which anyone in authority has to make with subjects and with God. The mandate to govern is always to do so wisely and graciously so the vision God has for all may be realized.

The Exodus reading speaks God's response: "I have ... heard the groaning, ... and I have remembered my covenant, ... and will deliver you from slavery...." God's purpose is always the creation of that covenant which will be honoured, with its law written on the hearts of all – including those who govern. May it be so!

### Prayer:

Let the days surely come, O God, when your new covenant is established and your love, generosity, and justice abound on the earth because it is ingrained in humanity's DNA. Awaken all the powerful to your constant call to govern with the heart and wisdom of Jesus the Christ. Awaken in all people, and in me, a yearning and energy for that new covenant with you, in Christ.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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## Friday

### Scripture:

- Exodus 19:9b-25
- Psalm 2
- Hebrews 11:23-28

### Reflection:

The Exodus passage reminds us that dealing with the Holy can be a dangerous thing. All ministers and faith community leaders take note! When the ordained receive the Bible and are told to "take authority to proclaim the Gospel," there is an awesome responsibility involved. By faith, we know ourselves bound to a larger will and purpose, which we trivialize at our peril.

The injunction not to "break through to Yahweh to look" is a warning that imagining that we can control God, comprehend God, limit God, contain God – anything to put boundaries around God's freedom and omnipotence – is a fool's game and potentially deadly. Don't get presumptuous about God's presence or absence, weakness or power!

In this time of challenge for the church and discouragement, we risk losing our soul and destroying faith when we think God is no longer actively engaged in creating a new thing. God has been around a long time and our limited days are no measure for God's eternity, wisdom, and power-filled love.

### Prayer:

Alpha and Omega, strengthen in us the humility we need to remember that you are the Creator of heaven and earth, that you have loved all creatures and your human family into being, that you persist and persevere in calling us to a larger vision for life, that you long for a world where justice, respect, generosity and peace are the heart of all relationships, that you will bring your vision for heaven and earth to completion.

Thank you, for Jesus Christ – his Way, Truth, and Life – in whom we can be confident and trust you. Amen.

## Saturday

### Scripture:

- 1 Kings 21:20-29
- Psalm 2
- Mark 9:9-13

### Reflection:

Before God's reign will be fully realized, there have to be prophetic figures like Elijah to challenge the power structures and to call people to repentance. Courageous people of faith willing to risk their well-being are needed for God's justice to arrive.

King Ahab had robbed Naboth of his vineyard and then killed him extra-judicially. He had the power and very few to challenge him. But Elijah knew himself accountable to a higher power. That higher power – God – was incensed at the injustice and the royal murder of the neighbour. Elijah's mandate: call Ahab to account and to repentance. It worked, but at great risk to the prophet's well-being.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was another who risked his life to end the tyranny of Hitler's Germany. It cost him everything, except his soul!

What are the current reasons for "going to the wall" in God's name: sex slaves, global warming, abusive labour conditions, the abuse of oil and energy, the destruction of environments, the enlarging gap between poor and rich, the failure to nurture human potential, ...?

### Prayer:

Gracious God, our faith is small. Increase, we pray, our faith and our courage, that like Elijah we may be faithful witnesses to your wisdom, your creative power, your blessing. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear where your voice is crying out for justice and for healing creation. Honour, glory, and majesty are yours today and always, God - Father, Christ, and Spirit - one God, Mother of us all.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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