

## 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

(May 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008)

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## Monday

### Scripture:

- Joel 2.18-29
- Psalm 104.24-34,35b
- Romans 8.18-24

### Reflection:

The culture out of which the book of Joel comes believed that wealth and peace were signs of the strength and favour of a nation's god, while famine and war were punishment or signs of the god's weakness. The famine, hunger and war experienced by Jerusalem were interpreted as God's punishment and abandonment of the people. This text is God's response to Jerusalem's plea for God to return to the people and show favour to them. Most of us are probably not comfortable with a theology that has God punishing and shaming people and then having a change of heart, but almost anyone who lives long enough will more than likely go through the experience of feeling abandoned by God, or that their world has come crashing down around them. This passage speaks to suffering, struggling people to assure them of God's care for and presence with them, and God's ability and desire to bring life out of the midst of death.

Where have you experienced God's gracious generosity?

### Prayer:

Generous One, all good things come from you. When we find ourselves feeling alone or set upon, or living with the deep pain of the world, fill us with good things. Restore us and renew us, and fill us with your life.

Today I pray for \_\_\_\_ - friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ's name I pray.

## Tuesday

### Scripture:

- Ezekiel 39.7-8,21-29
- Psalm 104.24-34,35b
- Romans 8.26-27

### Reflection:

This short passage from Romans is one of my favourite parts of the letter. I often rely on its promise when I find myself without words to express my deepest feelings and thoughts. It also strikes me as an invitation to contemplative prayer. A prayer focus on talking to God, even when we have all the words, is limiting. When "we don't know how to pray as we ought" and the Spirit intercedes on our behalf, we are given an unbelievable gift: not having to know what to say, but trusting that in our desire to rest quietly in God, all that needs to be said shall be said, and we shall receive everything we need.

Can you recall a time when you could not find the words, but knew that God understood anyway?

### Prayer:

Silent One, you are closer to me and know me even better than I know myself. I thank you that it is not up to me alone to find the words to commune with you. Thank you for the gift of silence, and for your promise that in your intimate knowledge of me and love for me, you require of me only what I can give, and will meet me the rest of the way.

Today I pray for \_\_\_\_ - friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ's name I pray.

## Wednesday

### Scripture:

- Numbers 11.24-30
- Psalm 104.24-34,35b
- John 7.37-39

### Reflection:

This passage from John challenges me. The difference between the Pharisee and the woman who is "a sinner" does not seem to be the nature or degree of their sinfulness, but rather that the woman is aware that she is a sinner who has been forgiven, while the Pharisee apparently is not. The woman's generosity is born out of two things: her knowledge that she is a sinner, and her knowledge that she has been forgiven. In my experience, some of us in The United Church have a tendency to downplay our status as sinners in a desire to focus on our goodness as God's creatures. While that can be good to a point, I think we run the risk of ending up like the Pharisee: out of touch with our capacity to fall short of God's will, and our ability to experience ourselves as forgiven and loved. As such, we may end up looking more like the Pharisee than the sinful woman when it comes to our generosity as well.

### Prayer:

Loving God, perhaps we are afraid of admitting our sinfulness because we fear that we may not be forgiven, or because we do not want to see part of the truth of ourselves. Show our real selves to us – good and bad – and give us the grace of knowing that all of that is accepted in your loving embrace. Put us in touch with the depth of our darkness so that we can rejoice in the fullness of your forgiving grace, and respond to the world with the same generosity you have shown to us.

Today I pray for \_\_\_\_ - friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ's name I pray.

## Thursday

### Scripture:

- Job 38.1-11
- Psalm 8
- 2 Timothy 1.8-12a

### Reflection:

Yesterday's reflection on the passage from John doesn't use the word "arrogance," but it alludes to it. Today's passage from Job speaks directly to human arrogance. Job is reminded in no uncertain terms that God is God, and he (Job) is not. Job is "put in his place," and by extension so are we in the most positive sense: we are reminded of and invited to accept our status as creatures under a loving Creator. That this God desires nothing less than the deepest relationship with us is reason enough to shout "hallelujah!"

Can you recall a time when you felt both put in your place and uplifted by God's love for you at the same time?

### Prayer:

Holy and awesome God, you are beyond my ability to fully comprehend, but I trust that you fully comprehend me. You are beyond my ability to fully love, but I trust that you fully love me. Help me to find my true and proper place in you.

Today I pray for \_\_\_\_ - friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ's name I pray.

## Friday

### Scripture:

- Job 38.12-21
- Psalm 8
- 2 Timothy 1.12b-14

### Reflection:

Psalm 8 sets a similar tone as the one in Job as it describes the majesty of God. And while it is clear, as in Job, that the proper place of humanity is lower than God, the psalmist notes the special place humans occupy within creation as stewards responsible for the rest of creation. Once again we find ourselves "put in our place," but this time it is a little more elaborate: we live under God, and yet with power to affect the rest of God's creation for good or ill. We have been given an awesome authority and responsibility, even as we remember that we ourselves are "dust."

Where are the places in your life that you are aware of both your creature-hood and your responsibility as a steward?

### Prayer:

Beloved, how good it is to find our true home, our true place of rest. May we experience ourselves as your creatures, and you as our God. And may we take seriously the responsibility with which you have entrusted your human creatures: care for the works of your hands. Kindle in us the joy of being and doing what you created us for: to worship and serve you, and to care for creation.

Today I pray for \_\_\_\_ - friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ's name I pray.

## Saturday

### Scripture:

- Job 38.22-28
- Psalm 8
- John 14.15-17

### Reflection:

In this first week after Pentecost, we encounter John's description of Jesus' promise to send his followers an "Advocate," or helper, to be with us forever. What does it mean for us as followers of Jesus to have the "Spirit of truth" as our advocate, or helper? This is the same Spirit Paul describes in Romans as interceding with sighs too deep for words when we do not know how to pray. "Truth" is a loaded word. Many people claim to know it or have it; it gets used so much, in so many different ways, and by people on opposite sides of any issue that it is in danger of losing its meaning. Pilate's question to Jesus, "What is truth?" seems as relevant as ever. But if this Spirit of truth abides with us, and is in (or among) us, then perhaps it is in the silence, when we cease trying to make truth mean what we want it to mean, that the Spirit of truth speaks to the First truth, and we are really at prayer.

Can you recall moments when you have been aware of the deep truth of God at work in you?

### Prayer:

Spirit of truth, thank you for your constant presence with us. Thank you for your desire to be with us and to help us. Increase our desire to know your will for us. Create in us quiet places, where your quiet truth can be made known. Ground us in a truth that does not seek to control others, and is not afraid. Help us not to be afraid of the truth, but to see it as our friend.

Today I pray for \_\_\_\_ - friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ's name I pray.