

## 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:

- Leviticus 9.1-11, 22-24
- Psalm 99
- 1 Peter 4:11-6

### Reflection:

I have a cookbook on my shelf, with recipes from a century or more ago. One of my favourites starts "Have your husband slaughter a pig." He declined, by the way. In our urban life, the realities and rituals of slaughter are completely unknown to us. But not to Moses' wandering Israelites. Leviticus describes the ordination of Aaron, the rituals by which he became a priest - Rites steeped in the blood of sacrifice and sin offering. It's so far from our modern rituals we don't recognize it, it seems grotesque and bizarre

Though times had changed in Jesus day, still, the rites of priesthood, the mediation between God and humanity, were steeped in blood - the symbol of both life and death. There was an expectation of blood as the price of transgression, blood as payment of debt, blood as the symbol of a holy and sacrificial life. Much of Christian tradition has interpreted Jesus' death against the backdrop of that expectation. Whatever our interpretation of that event, Christ brings us good news: there is no debt that must be paid in blood. Christ's life, death and resurrection make LIFE the sacrificial offering. A life lived in Christ's way is the only sacrifice either worthy of God, or asked by God.

### Prayer:

Christ is risen!  
From the dust and dirt  
of a cave, from the  
realities of blood and pain  
You rose to new life.

We turn from those realities,  
yet our lives are founded in them.  
Where the threat of death does  
stop the one who searches for freedom,  
then freedom is already won. Amen

## Tuesday

### Scripture:

- Numbers 16.41-50
- Psalm 99
- 1 Peter 4.7-11

### Reflection:

"The end of all things is at hand." says Peter. The idea of the imminent end runs throughout the New Testament. Yet 2000 years later what "at hand" means is somewhat elusive. Perhaps, as C.S. Lewis's Christ figure, "Aslan" says - "I call all times soon." Perhaps "at hand" isn't really about time, but about the nearness of the kingdom. Whichever is meant, Peter gives instructions on how to behave, when the end is at hand. First, keep sane and sober. The imminent end of all things might seem to be license for all kinds of things. But instead, the instructions are, "above all maintain constant love for each other", or as the KJV says "fervent charity". In Greek, agape is the love we translate "charity". The love, as one person said, which seeks not to possess but to give. "And as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve others with gifts you have received." What grace, what gift is it that God has given to use now? What gift is it that God is asking you to give ungrudgingly in the situation you are in? It is sometimes easier to look at the big picture, we can promise to love - because we forget that love is an action, not just an emotion. To truly love is to act in love, not in some larger metaphysical way, but perhaps in one, small, concrete act that serves those who are "at hand". The end is "near", the kingdom is "at hand" and in your hands.

### Prayer:

Maranatha - Come Lord, Come.  
You who promised to  
Come again.  
Maranatha - Come Lord, Come.

Show me how to use  
the gifts I have been given  
to serve those near to me. Amen

## Wednesday

### Scripture:

- 1 Kings 8.54-65
- Psalm 99
- John 3:31-36

### Reflection:

I prefer the KJV's translation of the opening of Psalm 99 "The Lord reigneth". Yahweh reigns. All the language of this hymn is the language of glory, but also the language of awe, and of power. Even, the language of fear. The God of modern times is a gentle, loving God. But the God of this psalm is a God before whom all the people of the earth tremble. I usually want a comforting God, a laughing God. But perhaps sometimes I need an awesome God, a God whose power is evident when the earth trembles, whose creative power working in us can work justice, and equity and righteousness. When I walk past the homeless, the addicted the desperate and I don't know how to help. When I read about the children of Afghanistan or Darfur and I despair that there is an answer. Perhaps I need that assurance that "The Lord reigneth". And in that reigning there is a power that can overcome. A God who can "establish equity". Perhaps this is what John means when he says, "He who comes from earth can only speak of earthly things" - we have only earthly answers. But the one from above can testify to the power of heaven.

### Prayer:

Blessed be the Lord,  
Be with us, O God,  
As you were with our ancestors,  
do not leave us or abandon us  
but incline our hearts to you  
to walk in your ways,  
In awe at the power and wonder  
that creates all things. Amen.

## Thursday

### Scripture:

- Exodus 19.1-9a
- Psalm 33.12-22
- Acts 2.1-11

### Reflection:

In the middle of the desert, when the Israelites have escaped from Egypt, the Spirit of God descends upon them in a pillar of smoke and speaks to Moses. When Jesus' disciples gathered following his death, resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit blew into them, with a sound like a mighty wind and tongues of fire inspiring in them all the "tongues" of humanity. The people of every land said "we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Smoke and fire fill the chosen with the wonders of God and they cannot help but speak it. Some time ago I heard a group of teenagers on a bus. They had been to a big musical event, and they were filled with the music and the sense of being together and they'd seen smoke and flames and it "was, like, awesome!" And though they were overloud on that late night bus they were also cheerful, sharing their seats and moving gracefully for others. I loved to hear them, overflowing with spirit and camaraderie, and singing the lyrics and telling each other about it in language I could barely understand. And for me, that night, they were the wonder of God - because their enthusiasm affected us all and we each stepped out of the bus into darkness made lighter and warmer by their presence.

### Prayer:

Good people, cheer God!  
We who seek you, God,  
sound best when praising.  
We Use guitars to reinforce our Hallelujahs!  
Play Your praise on a grand piano!  
Invent our own new song to you;  
give you a trumpet fanfare. Amen  
(Adapted from "The Message" - Ps. 33)

## Friday

### Scripture:

- Exodus 19 16-25
- Psalm 33.12-22
- Romans 8.14-17

### Reflection:

Those who are led by God are the children of God. Those who have received the spirit are not enslaved, but freed, adopted by God, the inheritors of God. So says Paul in Romans 8. Some scholars believe that the world Jesus lived in and the world Paul wrote about was full of orphans - those children set outside the rights and rites of inheritance. The children of mixed race, the children of rape, the families whose mothers worked in forbidden places. When Jesus says "bring the little children to me", he uses the language of adoption - when he names people as children of God, he means something more than a metaphor. He means that all these who are cut off, cast out, separated from community, worship, and belonging have the right to come before God. They have the right to worship, the right to enter the synagogue or temple, the right to an inheritance in a community of faith, the right to inherit the Spirit. Even we, who are unworthy, the cast out, the ones who don't belong inherit the Spirit. And all who inherit the Spirit share in both suffering and in "glory" - the ability to declare the wonder of God.

### Prayer:

We're depending on you, God;  
you are everything we need.  
What's more, our hearts brim with joy  
since we've taken for our own your  
holy name.  
Love us, God, with all you've got--  
that's what we're depending on.  
Amen.

(Adapted from "The Message" - Ps 33)

## Saturday

### Scripture:

- Exodus 20:1-24
- Psalm 33.12-22
- Matthew 5.1-12

### Reflection:

In the desert God presented Moses the "ten commandments" We often think of them as "do not's", but I have always loved to hear them expressed as "do's" not don't's. Love the Lord your God. Worship only God, for idols will lead you astray. Speak lovingly of God. Rest every seventh day and stop to laugh and hug your children and talk to each other. Honour your mother and father and honour family and covenant. Love life and keep it sacred. Be faithful. Be honest in all things. Be truthful in all things. Be grateful for the abundance of God. It sounds like a ten step program for a recovering materialist. One for me! And like all twelve step programs, it's a journey that is best shared. We seek a way to live with integrity- in the communities we create. Communities we can walk to, or far flung communities we walk with, as Paul did through letters or as we do through electronics and connections of the Spirit. Whether in a desert, where honour and covenant and honesty meant life or death, or in a wilderness of political lies and weapons of mass destruction - faithfulness, honesty and truth are the stuff of our recovery to the kin-dom. Christ summed up all these - Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind, and Love your neighbour as yourself.

### Prayer:

Consider re-reading Matthew 5.2-11 as a prayer.