

**ST PETER'S CHURCH  
BRACKLEY**

**"Loving God, loving each other, loving Brackley"**





In July's magazine, I offered three tips for reading the Bible on your own so I thought it only right that I give some equivalent advice for praying on your own. Few Christians are satisfied with their prayer lives but here are three tips that might help. I'm preaching to myself as well as to you.

### **1) Close the door**

This is Jesus' top tip in Matthew 6:6, "When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen." He wants us to guard against the hypocrisy of never praying alone but only when we are seen by others. Closing the door is a sign that we are less concerned for the praise of humans than for the praise of our heavenly Father, who "sees what is done in secret" (v7). This gets to the heart of our motivation: instead of praying to show off to others or because your vicar tells you to, pray because you have a Father who loves you and longs for you to speak to him. This also reminds us that our prayers don't need to be flowery or syntactically-impressive: we are beloved children speaking to a parent. Very practically, closing the door can also help to minimise interruptions. Your version, therefore, might include leaving your mobile phone in another room or talking a solitary walk to pray – whatever helps you to close the door on distraction.

### **2) Use the Bible**

Use what you read in the Bible as a basis for prayer. Without this steer, your brain (if it's a typical human brain) will probably struggle either to know what to pray or to hold a train of thought. Turning

the Bible into prayer is brilliant when I'm not sure where to begin, or when the dust on my windowsill catches my eye and I think, "I'll just get up and wipe that down – that wouldn't be wrong, would it?" Sometimes it's the good things that keep us from praying, not the bad things. Reading the Bible keeps me on track and so I try constantly to flip between the two: read, pray; read, pray; read, pray. Of course, the Bible is full of its own prayers and sometimes I'll use one of these as my launchpad. The obvious one comes later in Matthew 6, "This then is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name....'"

### **3) Have a system**

When it comes to praying for other people, the task can feel overwhelming. One approach is to start with your closest circle of family and friends, then move outwards to church, other friends, colleagues, the community, the country and the world. Or you could do the reverse. Another method I've used at times, is to write a long list of the names of all the individuals, couples, groups and organisations I want to pray for, then divide them up across the seven days of the week. Whatever you do, it helps to have a system.

Of course, Christians don't *just* pray on their own. If you have never attended the Church Prayer Meeting, why not give it a try at 7:45pm on the second Thursday of the month. It currently happens for 45 minutes over Zoom and short, simple prayers are encouraged. Some people attend who are not comfortable praying out loud, so you are welcome even if you don't yet have the confidence to speak up. Equally, we really encourage people to pray in pairs, and all through September I'll be suggesting those who attend church take a 'Word One-to-One' booklet home and find someone

who will read the Bible with them for 20 minutes with and pray for 10 minutes.

Also coming up this month is our new Alpha Course Online, running 7:30-8:45pm via Zoom on six Wednesday evenings beginning on 9<sup>th</sup> September. All are welcome: churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike. Is there a friend you could invite who would never come to St Peter's but might tune in online to a discussion from the comfort of their own homes?

As we begin a new season full of uncertainty, the plan is to continue services online and in-person for the foreseeable future. We will have a Harvest Festival at St Peter's on 27<sup>th</sup> September, but it will have to look a little different from previous years. We already miss the cheerful servant-heartedness of Connie Coleman as she begins life in Devon after 51 years at St Peter's (including 13 as a Lay Pastoral Minister) - she leaves behind a big hole. But we recommit ourselves to depending on the Lord for everything and therefore to the duty and delight of private prayer, remembering that our times are in His hands (James 4:13-15). Let me wish you every blessing for the month ahead.

Love in Christ,

Rev. Rich Duncan.



# September

2 <sup>nd</sup> Weds	10am – 12noon 2.30pm – 3pm	Private Prayer Tea with the Vicar (via Zoom)
5 <sup>th</sup> Sat	9.30am to 12.30pm	PCC Planning Meeting (church hall or via Zoom)
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Sun</b>	<b>Trinity 13</b> – first Sunday of the month 9.30am	Holy Communion
9 <sup>th</sup> Weds	10am – 12noon 2.30pm – 3pm 7.30pm - 8.45pm	Private Prayer Tea with the Vicar (via Zoom) Alpha Session 1 (via Zoom)
10 <sup>th</sup> Thurs	7.45pm	Church Prayer Meeting (via Zoom)
<b>13<sup>th</sup> Sun</b>	<b>Trinity 14</b> -second Sunday of the month 9.30am	Holy Communion
16 <sup>th</sup> Weds	10am – 12noon 2.30pm – 3pm 7.30pm - 8.45pm	Private Prayer Tea with the Vicar (via Zoom) Alpha Session 2 (via Zoom)
<b>20<sup>th</sup> Sun</b>	<b>Trinity 15</b> – third Sunday of the month 9.30am 12noon	Holy Communion Holy Baptism
23 <sup>rd</sup> Weds	10am – 12noon 2.30pm – 3pm .30pm - 8.45pm	Private Prayer Tea with the Vicar (via Zoom) Alpha Session 3 (via Zoom)
<b>27<sup>th</sup> Sun</b>	<b>Harvest Festival</b> -fourth Sunday of the month 9.30am	Holy Communion
29 <sup>th</sup> Tues	2pm	Magazines will be delivered to distributors
30 <sup>th</sup> Weds	10am – 12noon 2.30pm – 3pm 7.30pm - 8.45pm	Private Prayer Tea with the Vicar (via Zoom) Alpha Session 4 (via Zoom)



## READINGS

6th - Romans 8:1-17

13th - Romans 8:18-30

20th - Romans 8:31-39

27th - Matthew 6:25-34

### **'Big Conversation' launched on clergy care and wellbeing**

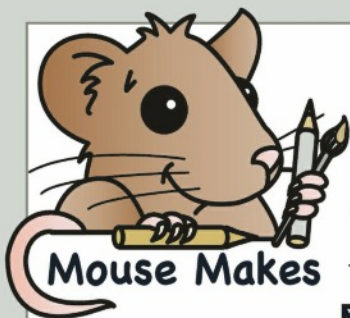
Churches and clergy across the country are to join in a nationwide discussion, the 'Big Conversation', aimed at improving the care and wellbeing of ministers.

It follows the recent welcome of the *Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing at General Synod*. Now General Synod has asked that the whole church reflect on the questions it poses over the next two years. Hence, the 'Big Conversation'.

The Covenant commits all parts of the Church, as well as individual clergy, to sharing responsibility for the welfare of ministers and their households.

Recommendations include promoting awareness of stress and the dangers of burnout as part of training for ordained ministry. Also, there will be new resources for licensing and induction services that highlight the care and wellbeing of clergy. The Group also recommended more pastoral supervision for clergy through coaching or mentoring.

The Revd Canon Simon Butler, who headed the Working Group, said: "The care and wellbeing of the clergy is crucial to the health of the Church at worship, in mission, and in pastoral care."



The **Bible** is a collection of **books** that took over 2,000 years to write! The books were written by many different people, all helped and inspired by God. The Bible has books about:

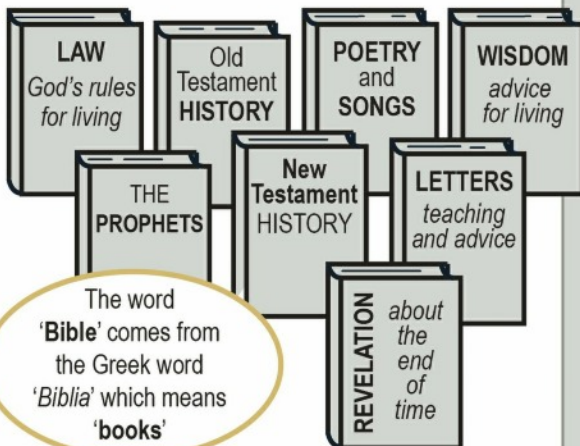
There are **66** books in the Bible. How many can you name?



### BIBLE WORDS

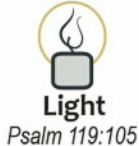
The Bible words in **BOLD** type on this page are also hidden in the word search, can you find them?

P L B O W I K  
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 O G O N S W O  
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The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word 'Biblia' which means 'books'

God speaks to us today as we read the Bible. The Bible encourages us, corrects us and shows us how to live, it also describes itself as:



...but most of all The Bible teaches us about **God** and how we can be friends with Him.

29<sup>th</sup> Sept

## Enter all the angels, led by Michael

What is an angel? Easy, people think: a shining figure with glorious wings, who appears from time to time to do some mighty work for God or bring a very special message from him.

Well, that's right in one sense (apart from the wings, which owe more to stained glass windows than the Bible). But the fact that not all 'angels' in the Bible are 'glorious' or 'shining' should make us hesitate to categorise them in this spectacular way. After all, the three apparently ordinary men who visited Abraham and Sarah to tell them that she would have a son even though she was long past child-bearing age had none of those outward embellishments. Nevertheless, Abraham recognised them as divine messengers.



The Bible is full of angels, from the early chapters of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, and often they had a key role in crucial events. It seems, from just two instances, that Michael was their leader, an 'archangel'. In many stained glass windows he's seen with a sword, because in a vision in Revelation he led the angelic host who fought and defeated Satan and his army.

In the Gospels, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in the Temple, to tell him that his elderly wife was to have a son, the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist. An angel - Gabriel - appeared to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. An angel appeared 'in a dream' to Joseph, the village carpenter in Nazareth, to tell him to go ahead and marry his fiancée, Mary, and later - also in a dream - warned him not to go back to Bethlehem. A 'young man', whom we take to have been an angel, was sitting in the empty tomb on Easter morning, waiting to tell the startled women that Jesus wasn't there - He had risen (Mark 16:5).



Without going into every biblical reference to angels, those should be sufficient to show that the word covers an enormous diversity of experience. So the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of those who practice hospitality as sometimes 'entertaining angels unawares'. Sometimes people recognised angels for who they were, and sometimes they didn't. Angels, quite simply, are God's agents or emissaries, messengers and ministers of His will. Sometimes they are human; sometimes they seem to be spiritual beings.

Perhaps we could even say that *anyone*, in any situation, who is at that moment God's 'messenger' to us, or serves us graciously, is an 'angel'. So, when we say, 'Oh, be an angel and pop up to the chemist for my prescription', we may be nearer the heart of the matter than we think!

If you have enjoyed this short online edition of the current magazine, you can purchase the full 20 page printed edition for the modest sum of 40p.

The magazine is available at Jems on the Market Place or you can have delivered to your door at no extra charge monthly.

If you would like to take out an annual subscription for home delivery please email Marilyn Israel at

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