



The Diocese of
Canterbury

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

CANTERBURY DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION OF READERS

Special points of interest:

- Reader Ministry Agreements
- Continuing Ministerial Education
- St. Augustine's Library
- Psalm 84
- Suggested Reading

Newsletter

Winter 2005

We wish all our Readers and their families a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

In January or February 2006 it will be time to engage in a Review of your Ministry Agreement with your incumbent. This should be a two way conversation to discuss the progress of your ministry over the last year. Very few ministry agreements were submitted to the Warden last year, please ensure that you make every effort to submit yours by the end of March 2006. If you experience difficulties please notify our warden, Hilary.

This edition of the Newsletter focuses upon the Psalter and encourages us to consider how we may use the Psalms in our own devotions and in public worship.

More inside.....

Dates for your Diary - 2006

Saturday 18 March - Readers AGM at Harrietsham

9 – 11 June – Younger Readers 18-45!! Conference – London Colney

Sunday 9th July at 6 p.m. - Admissions and Re-commissioning Service at Canterbury Cathedral

Reader Ministry Agreements

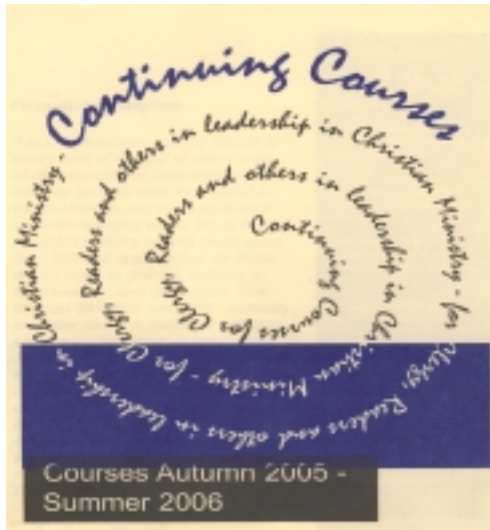
Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6

It is required that all Readers and their incumbents have a common understanding of the nature and scope of their particular ministry.

A Reader Ministry Agreement provides a transparent framework enabling both the Reader and the incumbent to work together effectively as a team. Such an agreement should be seen as a working document enabling the Reader and incumbent to agree changes as required by the demands of the parish or benefice and of course the Readers' own development needs.

A Reader Ministry Agreement should include items concerning your Spiritual Development, Public Worship and Ministry, Particular Areas of Responsibility, Frequency of meetings with your incumbent and local ministerial team, CME and further training, how your ministry might contribute towards your Parish and Deanery Mission Plan.

You should have put in place a new Ministry Agreement at the beginning of 2005, particularly if you did not already have one in place. If you did please prayerfully reflect upon it and consider what changes you may need to make to ensure that it reflects your ministry over the coming year. It is a great opportunity for you to consider how you wish your ministry to progress in 2006 and perhaps how you wish to develop over the next twelve months.



Continuing Ministerial Education (CME)

"Everyone undertakes in-service training as they seek to respond to an ever-changing world. We in the Church's ministry cannot stand apart"

+Stephen

The **Diocese of Canterbury** has launched the 2005/06 series of courses available from Autumn 2005 to Summer 2006. Bishops Stephen and Graham encourage us to take part in some form of training each year. Why not take a look at the Diocesan Booklet "Continuing Courses Autumn 2005 – Summer 2006" to see what courses you would like to book..... If you have any suggestions for future courses please send them to our Warden; Hilary.

More Opportunities!

Ridley Hall Cambridge – Resource and Refresh provided especially for resourcing and refreshing Readers. It is a rolling programme of short residential events in April and September, each year. If you would like further information – dates of future events, programmes and speakers either see www.ridley.cam.ac.uk or write to: The Administrator, Reader R&R, Ridley Hall, Cambridge, CB3 9HG.

Interested in a Theology degree?

Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill offers a modular BA degree by distance learning, in Theology and Religion. For further details contact Tom Cosgrove on 01865 488353 or by email - tcosgrove@brookes.ac.uk

St Augustine's Library

Burgate House
The Precincts
Canterbury CT1 2EH

Opening Times:

Mon – Fri except Wed - 9.00 – 17.30
Wed – 9.00 – 19.00 (Term Time)
Mon – Fri 10.00 – 16.00 (Vacation Time)
Closed Sat and Sun

We are pleased to advise that **St Augustine's Library** in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University is now available to all Readers in the Canterbury Diocese free of charge. Our thanks to Canon Ed Condry and the St Augustine's Librarian for their generosity to Readers.

The collection

The Library consists of books, journals, photocopying, word processing and internet facilities, as well as space to study. The Library aims to support Canterbury Christ Church University staff and students, local clergy and Readers and anyone with an interest in theology.

Bookstock

The library has a collection of 30,000 books housed on two sites. In the Burgate House Library you will find approx 9,000 books on Christian theology. The Old Palace houses the former library of St Augustine's Missionary College. This collection specialises in theology, missions, liturgy, church history and biographies of church figures.

Catalogues

All books housed in Burgate House are catalogued and can be found using the computer catalogue. A card catalogue will assist you to find books housed in the store (Old Palace).

Some Thoughts On...	The Editor
Psalm 84	

The Elohist Book of Psalms is referred to as ‘The Psalter’ and matches the Pentateuch in shape; comprising of 5 books.

There are 150 Psalms altogether and while they have many similarities they are also very different. Some are joyful and full of praise for God, others follow a path of lamentation and sorrow. Notwithstanding this, the Psalms are about communicating with, and praising God. This is reflected in the Hebrew word for the Psalms; it is *‘tehillum’* meaning ‘praises’. Even in the most sorrowful of Psalms, confidence and trust in God comes shining through.

Psalm 84 is no exception and can be found in the third book of the Psalter. It is thought to be a Zion Hymn or Pilgrim psalm, to be sung in the Temple. It is likely to have originated from poetry used in liturgical services. Although each Psalm is an individual piece of writing, it is set in a particular context within one of the five books. For example, Psalms 82 and 83 call for God’s judgement. Psalm 84, thought to be a hymn, depicts a pilgrimage to the Temple and the joy of worship there. Psalm 85 pleads for God’s favour and help.

The Psalm is headed with instructions to the director music

‘according to Gittith’

This is thought to indicate the tune that should be used to sing the Psalm. The Septuagint refers to the tune as the ‘song of the wine press’. The song may well have been played to different words, to be sung while the grapes were trodden out (Joel 3:13). As with our hymns of today, the words are often put to music that has originated from very different sources.

Further instructions are

‘Of the Sons of Korah. A Psalm’

The Sons of Korah would have been appointed temple singers and been responsible for collecting the psalms and setting them to music. They

would have followed the traditions and been part of the Guild of Temple Singers. In 2 Chronicles 20:19, reference is made to the Korahites

‘Then some Levites from the Kohahites and Korahites stood up and praised Yahweh, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice’

The Psalm would have been written by a pilgrim, a poet who was journeying to the Temple of Jerusalem where the enthronement of God is celebrated. No doubt the pilgrim was yearning to reach the temple (v2) and once there, Solomon’s great Temple made a great impression on him (v1). The Pilgrim is likely to live in a pagan country - in verse 10, he writes

‘Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked’

In verse 9 the Psalmist refers to God’s anointed one and so this indicates that the psalm was written in pre-exilic times around the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Psalm testifies strongly to the mood of festival pilgrims at the time and the Old Testament’s view that God is very much a God of the Temple. A point not shared by the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. Here, Jesus teaches us that God cannot be confined to one place. He is to be found wherever we are. However, a common theme in both the Old and New Testament is the blessing that comes from God (v6) and the happiness that is gained when the pilgrims are in communion with God.

I feel that although the people of OT regarded God as a ‘God of the Temple’ the psalmist may not follow this thought himself; yes, he has a sense of wonder in the temple but he is also aware of God’s blessing radiating out to him on the pilgrim trail.

The Psalm is divided into four areas, meditation (v1-2), sanctuary (v3-4), pilgrimage and prayer (v8-12).

In verse 2 the psalmist writes

‘My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord.....’

This links the Psalm with Isaiah 40:29 where he writes

‘He (Yahweh) gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak’

I believe the writer is keen to communicate his longing to be in the Temple Courts and then to tell of the wonder and awe that he feels when he sees

the Temple and experiences the worship there (v1). He feels like a bird nesting in the altar, safe and protected by God. He says “my King and my God”, his yearning satisfied. He has a deep awareness of the difference between man and God and wants to share his experience, that in faith, both belong together.

In verse 4, the psalmist envies the officials that work in the Temple and will worship God forever in that place. However in verse 5 he considers himself to be blessed too, as he is making the most of the *Kieros* (present time) and enjoying being in God’s presence in the Temple Courts.

Later, his thoughts turn to the pilgrimage itself (v6), where he considers it a privilege to be a pilgrim, despite the fatigue and the dryness of the land. He conveys a strong theological message referring to the part of the journey through the Valley of Baca. Baca is Hebrew for Balsam Trees. The trees grow in the arid valleys around Jerusalem. The area is very hot and dry, water would be very scarce.

The psalmist writes that the pilgrims transformed the area into spring after the rains had come. Perhaps the rains in this context, are blessings coming from God. In the book of Joel 2:23 he writes

‘Be glad, rejoice, Yahweh has given autumn rains in righteousness’

This emphasises again that God works miracles and that a true believer can overcome troubles and danger through Him.

The Psalmist has a key message here, that through affliction, joy can come. Through hardship we can learn to rejoice in our many blessings and grow from weakness to a position of strength (v7). The strength referred to is Divine strength and is different from human strength. Divine Strength is the manifestation of being in a right relationship with God (righteousness) when the pilgrim finally meets with his ‘living God’ (v2) on Zion (in the Temple Courts).

In verses 8 and 9 the Psalmist looks back on the pilgrimage with joy and gratitude and ends in prayer. The pilgrims practice intercessory prayer, praying to God for their human King, and their own people. This is in keeping with the Festival of the Tabernacles where the enthronement of God is celebrated. Originally, the festival would probably have celebrated a pagan event such as the enthronement of a human king. In addition the pilgrims prayed for their people back in their native land. In this respect, as the pilgrims are away from their own country, they are experiencing what it is like to be member of a national and religious community. They have a wonderful opportunity to explore their faith and make it grow even stronger.

This theme is explored further in Verse 10. The faith of Worshippers and that of their native country is one that belongs together. Therefore, one day in the Temple means more to the Psalmist than 1,000 days spent in a godless country, perhaps this could be a reference to the Gentiles.

In verse 11 the psalmist sums up what the hours in the sanctuary meant to him. God is effectively his battlement and shield, sheltering him from danger and temptation. He feels that with God on his side he can return to his own country in safety. The teaching of the Old Testament says that to trust in God leads to spiritual and material prosperity. This may mean that we should put God first in our lives and then everything else will fall into place. This does not mean that we will not encounter difficulties, but through God we will have the strength to overcome them.

The psalmist who has a great yearning for the Temple gained courage and strength through discovering a rich source of blessing. The psalmist paints a picture of fountains springing up (v6), opening to those who believe the opportunity of a deeper faith and deeper spirituality. He knows what wonder it is to have communion with God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Job 38:26 he writes

‘To water a land where no man lives, a desert with no-one in it’

In exploring the detail of the Psalm I have found that I can empathise with the Psalmist. The Psalm is very much a hymn of praise sung in the Temple at the end of a long journey. I can imagine being on the pilgrimage, experiencing the hardship and fatigue of the journey. When I finally arrive and see the splendour of Solomon’s Temple I can understand the awe that the Psalmist must have felt. He is finally at home, safe in Yahweh’s house. The wonderful experience of being in close fellowship with God comes across very clearly in this Psalm.

Is this the experience of worshippers in our churches today?

Further Reading	The Editor
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If you are inspired by Psalm 84 and wish to explore the Psalter in more detail. Why not seek out the following: :

Suggested Reading for further study

The Psalms - W O E Osterley (SPCK 1959)

The Psalms - Artur Weiser (Old Testament Library 1962)

Interpreting the Psalms - Patrick D Miller, Jr. (Fortress Press 1986)

Narrative in the Hebrew Bible - D Gunn and D N Fewell (Oxford 1993)

Voicing God's Psalms

Calvin Seerveld

Eerdmans, 2004

This book contains 37 psalms from the canonical book Psalms and several psalmic passages from elsewhere in Holy Scripture – all strikingly translated by Seerveld from the original Hebrew and Greek.

The Psalms are arranged into thematic clusters under nine progressive headings: *torah*, Melchizedek (rule of gentle justice), enemies, repentance and forgiveness, wrestling with the Lord, comfort, trust, God-promises, and Hallelujah! Together they provide a wonderful refreshing way to enter into the message of the Psalms.

A finely produced audio CD comes with the book and features readings by Seerveld, interspersed with melodies played by solo recorder or saxophone. Just what you need for inspiring personal devotions and when you help to develop new liturgies for that inspiring service or worship.

We do hope that you have found this edition informative and interesting. As you will be aware we would like to issue Newsletters and other documents concerning your Reader Ministry by e-mail. To help us, please ensure that we have your correct e-mail address by advising any changes to our Hon. Secretary, Donald Baldwin. Of course if you do not use e-mail we will continue to send items by surface mail.

Please send your comments or items for future editions by e-mail or write to David Kemp, Reader at Holy Cross, Bearsted with St Mary, Thurnham at my address .

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