



To all Licenced Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers

14 November 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Year of the Bible

Advent Sunday this year will mark the beginning of the 'Year of the Bible', which is a Diocesan initiative to help us engage with the Scriptures, both individually and within our worshipping communities.

The Old and New Testaments are foundational for our faith and its practice. In all our acts of worship we engage extensively with the Bible and so spend a lot of time listening to, and reflecting upon, sacred Scripture.

Consequently, it makes sense that we ought to know more about it. For instance, at the most basic we need to be able to find our way round the Bible which is like a library of books all in one volume. Would we know where to find 1 Samuel or 2 Chronicles? Would we know the name of the last book in the Old Testament? Would we know what the Apocrypha is? This is all basic, foundational knowledge that will help us to engage with the Bible on our thinking, our worship and our prayer.

As we go a bit deeper, it's helpful for us to be able to date when different parts of the Bible were written and what their historical context was (which often explains partially why they were written). It's fascinating to identify (particularly in the Old Testament) what kind of literature we're dealing with - for instance, is it a legal document, history, poetry, worship songs or doctrine and theology? In the New Testament it's illuminating to identify the slightly different presentations of Jesus in each of the Gospels. In reading the Epistles (which of course are the earliest parts of the New Testament) it is moving to read about how Paul wrote about his own spiritual experience of the Risen Christ turning his life upside down and about the other Epistles that shaped the early Church's understanding of Christ and his work of salvation.

At the end of the Year of the Bible, the hope is that we will be more knowledgeable about the Bible; that we be much more excited about the Bible and so will want to spend more time reading our Bibles; and that importantly we will be more able to make connections between the Bible and our everyday lives and decision-making.

The Launch

The Year will be launched on Sunday 4 December (Second Sunday of Advent) when clergy will ask all those attending worship that day to bring to church the Bible that they use at home. Before the final blessing, there will be an opportunity to pray for the coming year of the Bible and if it is your tradition for Bibles to be blessed. Then the prayer for the Second Sunday of Advent in the Book of Common Prayer could be said by the whole congregation:

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures
to be written for our learning;
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort
of your holy word,
we may embrace and forever hold fast
the hope of eternal life
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Bible Society Campaign

In Advent the Bible Society will run its national campaign Live the Bible, during which people will be encouraged to undertake acts of kindness in tune with Biblical teaching. As a Diocese we want to align ourselves with this campaign as we start the Year of the Bible.

Recommended Books on the Bible

On the website for Advent there will be books on the Bible for Christmas as recommended by the Bishops. As of January, there will be a new book on the Bible recommended every month through until November by a broad cross section of clergy and laity, which will resource and inform our thinking about the Bible.

Schools' Art Competition

The Diocesan Board of Education will be holding a Schools' Art Competition to celebrate the Year of the Bible. The competition is open to all pupils and adults in Church schools and registration forms will need to be returned to the Board of Education by 21 December 2016. The Art work submitted will cover the following themes. For primary school year groups the themes are: Bible stories, Bible characters, favourite verse/ passage, the Big Story of the Bible. For secondary schools and adults the themes are: who is God? Living the story, favourite verse/ passage, The Big Story of the Bible.

Schools

Schools and parishes are being encouraged to use *Open the Book* for collective worship and the Diocesan Board of Education have launched and are training schools in the new resource for Religious Education entitled *Understanding Christianity* which is text based.

Travelling Roadshows

In January and February, a small team of clergy and lay people will undertake 12 presentations across the diocese (4 in the east of the Diocese, 4 in the west and 4 centrally) with the title – Exploring the Bible Story. The presentations are to give an overview of the bible to those who attend. The dates and venues for the roadshows will be confirmed early in the new year.

The Lent Course

In 2017, Lent begins on 1 March and goes through to Easter Sunday on 16 April. The Lent course which is entitled ‘Hear the Word of the Lord’ will focus on different parts of the Bible and the various types of literature. There will be a series of talks which will be available on a DVD or downloadable from the website, whichever is more convenient. There will be two talks for each week of Lent and these can be used for individual reflection or used as a resource for group discussion. The subjects covered are:

Week 1: Bible Overview

Week 2: The Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament)

Week 3: The Prophets

Week 4: Other Old Testament Writings

Week 5 : The Gospels (and The Acts of the Apostles)

Week 6: The New Testament Letters (and the Book of Revelation)

There will also be some study notes to accompany the talks.

Bible Courses

After Lent there will be a range of resources and materials available for individuals or groups to further their Biblical knowledge and reflection. These will include *The Bible Course: Get the Big Picture*, *Making Good Sense of the Bible*, and *Lyfe*.

Preaching the Word of God

Following on from the Lent Course, there are also plans to provide resources for clergy and Readers for using and drawing upon the Bible in sermons. More details on this will be available in the new year.

The Archdeaconry Lectures for Clergy

As part of Clergy Ministerial Development provision, the clergy will be expected to attend at least one of the Archdeaconry lectures. The four Archdeaconry lectures are as follows:

Brighton and Lewes Archdeaconry

23 March 2017 at 10.30 – 12.30 at Holy Cross, Woodingdean

Professor David Wilkinson, Principal of St John's College, Durham, will give a lecture entitled: The Bible and Science

Hastings Archdeaconry

17 May 2017 at 18.00 – 20.00 at St John's, Upper St Leonard's

Christine Morgan, Head of Religion: BBC Radio, will give a talk entitled: The Bible and the Media.

Horsham Archdeaconry

14 June 2017 at 15.00 – 17.00 at St Mary's, Easebourne

Professor James Crossley, Professor of Bible, Society and Politics at St. Mary's University, Twickenham will give a talk entitled: The Bible and Politics

Chichester Archdeaconry

5 September 2017 at 15.00 – 17.00 at St Nicholas', Arundel

Professor John Barton, Oriel and Laing Professor, Oxford will give a talk entitled: Biblical Criticism in a Secular Culture

Cathedral Events

Throughout the Year of the Bible, Canon Anthony Cane will be organising a number of Bible-themed events at the Cathedral. On 8 and 9 February at 9.00am in the Cathedral there will be a discussion on a book by Simon Taylor entitled 'How to Read the Bible (without switching off your brain)' as part of the Book at Breakfast series. The Canon Chancellor's Lectures in June will be on 'The Bible in the Public Square' and will involve a number of speakers with expertise in this area. On 4 November there will be a Cathedral Study Day on 'Troublesome Texts: Exploring Difficult Parts of the Bible from the *Song of Songs* to the *Book of Revelation*' which will be led by Professor James Dunn and Professor Steve Moyise.

Themed Events

Parishes are encouraged to run their own themed events and to look at how planned events might relate to The Year of the Bible. One resource which could be used is the films on the Gospels of St Luke and St John produced by Lumo, which would be suitable for showing in for instance a parish hall and to which people could be invited.

So the Year of the Bible will hopefully help us to grow in understanding and knowledge of the Bible. But above all it will help us to grow spiritually. The Bible is a place where we can access the life of God and so in the words of Thomas Cranmer it is by 'reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting' the words of Scripture that we are given the resources to share in and live out the life of God.

With my thanks for our partnership in the Gospel

+*Martin*