

The Rhythm of Daily Prayer *by Jane Gillbe – 24 June 2011*

When I was young I loved the idea that when the sun was setting in one country it was rising in another far away. As we lived in India the time of sunset in the winter months was approximately the time of sunrise in England where most of our relatives lived. In this way we were connected.

Similar connections happen through the cycle of Morning and Evening Prayer throughout the Church. Over a period of two years a series of readings and psalms are set for each day that between them cover the vast majority of the Bible. There is a set for Morning Prayer and a different set for Evening Prayer. From earliest times, Christians gathered at regular hours during each day and night to respond to God's word with praise on behalf of creation and with intercession for the salvation of the world, so that, morning and evening emerged as the pre-eminent hours for the offering of this sacrifice of praise. As the sun moves across the globe so this offering is carried along to form a continuous and continuing act of Worship in which Christians across the world unite.

The services of Morning and Evening Prayer help Christians nowadays take part in this. Each morning at Holy Trinity at 8.30am (9.30 on Saturdays) Morning Prayer will be said by one, two and sometimes more but within the Parish others are joining in by reading the same readings and psalm in a time of quiet in their own homes. In this way they are saying prayers for the whole community and as the prayers go across the world prayers are being said by a few on behalf of the many in the Christian community.

To encourage this sense of community there is a booklet at the back of both Churches which covers three months at a time. It provides a prayer for the week; a psalm and two readings one Old Testament and one New Testament for each day; and a note of special Holy Days. By using this booklet members of the Parish are joined to each other through using the same readings and psalm each day.

I am a member of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis - a religious order. When I became a member I took on certain personal commitments and one of these is to have a time of Prayer each day and this is to include reading the Bible. To do this and be part of the rhythm of the daily prayer of the Church gives me a strong sense of grounding and supports me in my everyday life.

It is good to have the readings for the day set out and part of the rhythm is to read through books of the Bible that one may not choose to read otherwise. But as we progress through Jeremiah or Chronicles I and II the history that comes out and the beauty of the language often speaks to me. Sometimes I will hear a very familiar passage and will hear it in a different way. There are readings that we hear on Sunday mornings from St Paul's letters that seem very foreign but having read them in context of the readings for the week the background is there and what Paul is saying makes more sense. It is also good to have to read bits that we are less familiar with. Sometimes the calendar of readings leaves out verses or whole

chapters and I am often intrigued as to why and get sidetracked but that's not a bad thing.

The Psalms are like the prayers of the Bible and to say a Psalm each day has made me much more familiar with them and helped me with my own prayers. We all have times when listening to God in prayer is hard or seems impossible. It is at times like this that I have found taking the time to read a Psalm and passages from the Bible to be helpful in keeping the lines open to God. This makes it easier to be with Him and get through the difficult times.

The Prayers of the Church, both in our Parish community and in the wider world, go on. It is good for me to be part of that and also to know that others are part of it. The booklet is there so that others can join in: and it does not have to be everyday as others pray on our behalf when we cannot.

www.holytrinityguildford.org.uk