

## Diocese of Chichester Year of Prayer Lent Course 2018

- Lent Course 2018
- Inspiring Vision
- How the visual arts provide inspiration and pathways to prayer.
- The Trinity, Challenging Times, Discipleship, Prayers of Praise, Prayers as Life evolves and the Experience of Forgiveness are all explored across 6 weeks of reflection, discussion and listening.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury and Dame Patricia Routledge are amongst the guest contributors.

Through Lent 2018, as a central aspect of Diocesan year of Prayer, we have asked six people to choose their favourite painting, picture, or work of art and to explain what their choice says about prayer.

Contributors include the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Patricia Routledge, Lucy Winkett (Vicar of St James, Piccadilly), Caroline Spelman (First Estates Commissioner) and Charles Harrison (Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral).

For each week of Lent there is a chosen painting, a podcast, a special wall chart and notes of leaders and individuals following the course.

The opening introductory session is presented by the Bishop.

Each week, Lent groups and individuals are invited to reflect on the chosen painting by listening to a specially produced podcast (of around 15 minutes) in which the guest explains the significance to them personally of the chosen work.

But in so doing, the guests raise questions for all of us about our own prayer life and how our prayers develop as we mature, journey on our pilgrimage and discover more about the divine mystery as God speaks to us in good times and bad.

An accompanying set of notes for each session suggest Scripture Readings and exercises for us in response to what we see and hear.

By the end of the six weeks we hope that each participant's focus on their own prayer life will have been invigorated and challenged as a key aspect of our Year of Prayer.

## **WEEK ONE: Inspiring Vision. Prayer and the Trinity**

**Guest: The Bishop of Chichester**

**Painting: *Holy Trinity* by El Greco**

Bishop Martin Warner introduces the Lent Course and reveals his chosen painting. We will be challenged to look at how The Trinity inspires our prayer life and how the different persons of the Trinity guide and cajole us in our spiritual lives.

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:  
hold us firm in this faith,  
that we may know you in all your ways  
and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory,  
who are three Persons yet one God,  
now and for ever. Amen.

*Post-Communion, Trinity Sunday (Common Worship)*

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. 'Art can do things that words can't'. How might this impact the choices you make when, for example, you are planning an act of worship?
2. Discuss what it means to pray 'in and through and with' the Trinity.
3. How did it make you feel when you heard Bishop Martin say that your body is also part of the life of the Holy Trinity?

Read the Scripture passage

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes

from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

*Colossians 1.3-14*

How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. 'We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all the saints.' How well connected do you feel to the prayer life of the Church of England as a whole, and especially to our diocese of Chichester? What are the things which we might all be holding in prayer at this time?
2. Have you explored any new form of prayer in worship? How might you go about experimenting with different forms of prayer?
3. How often do you pray alone? Do you feel stuck, or dry, in your prayer life? Does God seem close or distant? What might rekindle the flame for you?

Suggested activity:

Bishop Martin said it is natural for us to want to draw, referring to cave paintings in Lacaux in France, and Banksy's graffiti. Have a go at drawing a picture which describes your relationship with God: you may use an image or shapes, or simply colours (allow about ten minutes). If in groups, swap your pictures and ask others what they see in your drawing, then, if you feel comfortable, explain what you intended.

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Michael Ramsey, *Be still and know: a study in the life of prayer* (Cowley Publications, 1983).

## **WEEK TWO: Prayer in Challenging Times**

**Guest: Lucy Winkett**

**Painting: *The Scream* by Edvard Munch**

Writer and Broadcaster Lucy Winkett, formerly at St Paul's Cathedral and now Rector of St James, Piccadilly encourages us to explore prayer in difficult times on our journey and what scripture says to about staying close to God, even when we feel alone. Her chosen painting has inspired her to think about how to wrestle with prayer in difficult times.

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

O God,  
who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers,  
that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright:  
Grant to us such strength and protection,  
as may support us in all dangers,  
and carry us through all temptations;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Collect, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (Book of Common Prayer)*

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. What other images of pain or distress do you know, and how have they made an impression on you?
2. What has it been like for you to try to pray in challenging times?
3. Lucy Winkett talks about the difficulty of finding silence in a noisy world. Do you want to be silent; and why?

Read the Scripture passage

I cry aloud to God,  
aloud to God, that he may hear me.  
In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;  
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;  
my soul refuses to be comforted.  
I think of God, and I moan;  
I meditate, and my spirit faints.  
You keep my eyelids from closing;  
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

I consider the days of old,  
and remember the years of long ago.  
I commune with my heart in the night;  
I meditate and search my spirit:  
'Will the Lord spurn for ever,  
and never again be favourable?  
Has his steadfast love ceased for ever?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?  
Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?'  
And I say, 'It is my grief  
that the right hand of the Most High has changed.'

*Psalm 77.1-10*

How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. How do you respond prayerfully to the realities of painful and distressing situations taking place around the world? How do you do this without simply presenting God with a list, or do you feel so overwhelmed that you don't know where to begin (or end)?
2. What places or situations do you find helpful when dealing with anxiety or distress in your own life? Where do you find stillness, and place your pain?
3. What resources or practices in your own worshipping community have helped you to pray, and cultivate silence?

Suggested activity:

- Alone or in your group, sit comfortably.
- Place yourself in the presence of God. You may like to begin by reciting a well-known or favourite prayer. Close your eyes, and keep silence for ten full minutes. You may find you need to set an alarm!
- After ten minutes, come out of the silence. You may want to conclude with another familiar prayer.
- If you are in a group discuss how the silence felt. If you are alone, you may like to write about – or draw, or paint – the experience.
- What thoughts or emotions surfaced during that time? How did the passage of time itself feel?
- Did you sense or receive anything unexpected in the prayerful stillness?

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Lucy Winkett, *Our Sound is Our Wound: Contemplative Listening to a Noisy World - The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book* (Bloomsbury, 2010).

**WEEK THREE: Prayer and Discipleship**  
**Guest: The Archbishop of Canterbury**  
**Painting: *The Call of Levi* by Caravaggio**

Justin Welby reveals his favourite painting on the theme of prayer. In a wide-ranging podcast, the Archbishop is candid about the difficulties of praying as a disciple of Jesus in hugely challenging times. He talks about the importance of a rule of life and how to pray on the move. Discipleship is intrinsic to the Christian pilgrimage.

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

Gracious God,  
you call us to fullness of life:  
deliver us from unbelief  
and banish our anxieties  
with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Collect, Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity (Common Worship Additional Collects)*

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. Do you identify with a particular character in the painting? Which, and why?
2. How have you experienced God's call in your own life, and how have you responded to it?
3. Why might people find it difficult to believe that God is truly interested in them? Do you find it difficult to think that God is truly interested in you?

Read the Scripture passage:

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' But when he heard this, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

*Matthew 9.9-13*

How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. What should be the role of the Church, nationally and locally, in contemporary society? How have you seen Christian discipleship transform the lives of others in your local area?
2. How has your worshipping community helped you to live as a disciple of Christ?
3. Archbishop Justin describes how his commitment to the rhythm of daily prayer gives his spiritual life stability amid pressure and change. What things give stability to your Christian life, and help you to pray?

Suggested activity:

Consider the Archbishop's emphasis on a Rule of Life. He talks about making time – even a little time – for God, and being regular in prayer. He also speaks of prayer as something which is never self-centred, but which reaches out to God in conversation.

Can you begin to draft a Rule of Life for yourself, which might enable you to pray regularly, more easily, and help direct your life more toward God - and your neighbour?

You might like to begin with just a few bullet points, and see how it feels to write down the commitment to prayer you are already making, or would like to make in future.

If you feel comfortable, share your thoughts with one another. You may find that others have come up with a similar pattern. Might you like to consider partnering with them, or forming a prayer group, so that you support each other in this commitment?

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Pocket Books; 1st Touchstone edition, 1995)

**WEEK FOUR: Prayer as life evolves**  
**Guest: Dame Patricia Routledge**  
**Painting: *L'Imensite* by Gustav Courbet**

After a lifetime in the theatre and as one of the best known faces on British television Dame Patricia introduces her favourite painting and what it says to her about her prayer life. In a very personal interview she explores how, as life develops and changes, our prayer life inevitably reflects that as we mature and grow older. And it's not always easy!

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

Be present, O merciful God,  
and protect us through the silent hours of this night,  
so that we who are wearied  
by the changes and chances of this fleeting world,  
may repose upon thy eternal changelessness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Order for Night Prayer (Compline) in Traditional Language (Common Worship)*

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. Have you considered the ageing process, and how it relates to your own discipleship and spiritual journey?
2. When have you felt yourself to be part of a greater scheme, or faced by God's mysterious 'otherness'?
3. How has your own experience of prayer changed through the course of your life? How do you continue to find meaning in prayers, and forms of words in church, which are very familiar? You may like to reflect on the General Confession, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer...

Read the Scripture passage:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

*Philippians 4.4-9*



How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. How might we interpret the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester for our region and society today?

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ  
for all the benefits Thou hast given me,  
for all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me.  
O most merciful Redeemer,  
friend and brother,  
may I know Thee more clearly,  
love thee more dearly,  
follow thee more nearly. Amen.

2. In what ways has your local worshipping community responded to change over time, and what part has prayer played in this process?

3. What were you praying for ten years ago? What are you praying for now? What might be your prayer in five or ten years' time?

Suggested activity:

As a group, share your earliest memories of prayer. If you can, share the prayers you remember from your childhood, and prayers you have learnt more recently which have been helpful to you. Are there common patterns in the group? Do you sense continuous progress in your prayer life, or can you see plateaus and troughs? Is there a time when you had stopped praying, and why was that? If you are engaging with this session alone, you may like to write these prayers and reflections down.

In a time of quiet prayer, pray the words you have remembered, and listen to what God may be communicating to you now, as you reflect on the changing times of your life. Consider your unique and treasured part in God's great, mysterious scheme of love.

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Basil Hume, *To be a Pilgrim: A Spiritual Notebook* (SPCK Classics, 2009).

## **WEEK FIVE: The Joy and Excitement of Prayer**

**Guest: Charles Harrison**

**Painting: *Chichester Cathedral Window* by Chagall**

Prayers of praise surprisingly don't come easily and yet, in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, there are many clues as to why prayers should be immersed in gratitude and thanksgiving to God our creator and redeemer. Charles Harrison believes that music inevitably enhances our sense of prayerfulness and chooses his favourite visual image to reflect this.

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

Risen Christ,  
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:  
open the doors of our hearts,  
that we may seek the good of others  
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,  
to the praise of God the Father. Amen.

*Collect for the Second Sunday after Easter (Common Worship, Additional Collects)*

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. Charles Harrison sees in the Chagall window 'uninhibited exuberance' and describes it as being 'turbulent with energy and enthusiasm'... 'a riot of rejoicing.' Are these things that you naturally or easily discern in a) your corporate worshipping and b) in your own prayer life?
2. 'Art is extravagant, expensive and inefficient' but can reflect God's extravagant love and care for us. How do you respond to this, when there are so many other needs in the life of the Church and demands on resources? Do we have our priorities rightly ordered?
3. We traditionally see Lent as a time that is solemn, quiet, reflective – perhaps a period of withdrawal, self-discipline, austerity and abstinence; but Charles Harrison says that it is not a time for abandoning hope but rather 'an opportunity to create space in our spiritual lives.' In what ways are you experiencing Lent differently this year and how easy or difficult are you finding it, amidst a busy life, to make space to pray, listen to God, and focus on the hope that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ brings to the world?

Read the Scripture passage

Praise the Lord!  
Praise God in his sanctuary;  
    praise him in his mighty firmament!  
Praise him for his mighty deeds;  
    praise him according to his surpassing greatness!  
Praise him with trumpet sound;  
    praise him with lute and harp!  
Praise him with tambourine and dance;  
    praise him with strings and pipe!  
Praise him with clanging cymbals;  
    praise him with loud clashing cymbals!  
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord!

*Psalm 150*

How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. The Psalms are full of thanksgiving and joy, pain and anguish, fear and sometimes anger and they run like a seam through Anglican liturgy. Does this surprise you? What does it feel like to be part of a tradition of religious experience that reaches back even hundreds of years before the earthly life of Jesus Christ?
2. Everyone has a favourite song or piece of music. Have you ever considered letting that experience into your prayer life? Think about and/or share in the group what your favourite music means to you and the occasions or events in your life to which it relates. It may be a wedding, a funeral, a holiday, or something quite different... Can you see how it might be a 'way in' to prayer or even a prayer in its own right?
3. Psalm 150 and Chagall's interpretation of it give 'a clear vision of what might be.' Charles Harrison speaks of our world as one which is uncertain and sees the window as being 'joyful with praise and teeming with creativity'. Discuss the thought that thanksgiving and joy can lead to 'a brighter, healthier and more loving world.' Could allowing real thanksgiving and joy into your prayer life lead you to be a brighter, healthier and more loving person?

Suggested activity :

Think about your favourite hymns or worship songs, and what they have meant to you at different stages in your life. Even if you think that no-one in your group is particularly musical, you may be surprised at how effective singing together can be. Try to decide between you which hymn or song you would like to sing: either use the internet, a hymnbook or other resource to help remember the words. As a group, sing this song together. Then keep a moment of silence, and reflect once again on the painting. Then repeat the song: can you sing it more confidently together, having been inspired by the words of the Psalm, and the image that is in front of you? Remember, you are joining together in singing the praises of God rather than singing the solo of your heart!

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Mark Braaten, *Prayer as Joy, Prayer as Struggle* (Liturgical Press, 2008).

**WEEK SIX: Prayer Repentance & Forgiveness. Holy Week Approaches.**

**Guest: Dame Caroline Spelman**

**Painting: *The Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt**

As Holy Week approaches, Dame Caroline takes some time out to reflect on her favourite work of art and the parable it evokes. Repentance and Forgiveness often dominate the headlines but everyone knows the challenge posed by both is hardly an easy one! How do we forgive others? Do we ourselves need to be forgiven? How does prayer play a part? And can we know God's forgiveness?

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray  
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:  
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,  
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid  
and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask  
but through the merits and mediation  
of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Collect, Twelfth Sunday after Trinity (Common Worship)*

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. Is it easy to believe in a God who is so willing to forgive and welcome us home?
2. This painting invites us to acknowledge our own failings and unworthiness. Do you find it easier to focus on the image of the forgiving father, or the repentant son?
3. As viewers of this painting, we are looking in on an intimate moment of reconciliation. How do we respond and engage when we see a) the need for and b) acts of reconciliation in the wider world, and situations closer to home?

Read the Scripture passage

Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a

severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

*Luke 15.11-24*

How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. Caroline Spelman talks about the knowledge that God can wipe the slate clean 'this week, in this service, from this very moment.' How do you prepare spiritually to make the prayer of confession that you recite frequently and corporately?
2. 'Trailing guilt and anger around are two very destructive emotions.' What can you do if you cannot forgive, or feel forgiven?
3. In the podcast, we heard the suggestion that we should not delay in forgiving others. What might this mean to you?

Suggested activity:

Caroline Spelman draws our attention to the father's big hands resting on the shoulders of his son. Spend a few moments looking at your own hands. Ask yourself, are these forgiving hands? Are they grasping hands? Are they hands for holding? Are they hands that keep people at a distance? Are they welcoming hands? Are they tight, clenched hands? Are they exhausted hands? Are they caring hands?

Trace the outline of your hand onto a piece of paper with a felt-tip pen, or pencil. On the picture of your thumb and fingers, write five things that you would like your hands to be, and what word would you most like to see in the palm of your hand?

Place your images on the floor in front of you. Keep silence, and pray for the grace to be able to achieve the things that God has placed in your hand, and the hands of other members of your group, today.

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994).

Liturgical texts: *Common Worship* and the *Book of Common Prayer*

Bible texts are from the NRSV (Oremus Bible)

Course notes by The Rev'd Dr Dominic Keech and The Rev'd Dr Anthony Moore