

Sanctuary First

A PLACE TO BE

Oct 2017: Turning points - leading a community to find home

Leadership can be a lonely experience. Whether you lead or are a team member it is essential that everyone understands the issues involved in being a leader. When we examine and reflect upon the pressures of leadership we become better team members and leaders. When leaders realise that their authority to lead, in essence, stems from the relationship with the team they lead it is not long before the role of the servant leader becomes evident. Ultimately of course all Christian leadership finds its authority in the call of God, who in turn models leadership for us in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Norman Drummond in his book *The Power of Three* unashamedly introduces Jesus as the best example of authentic leadership.

This month, following the lectionary, we are going to be considering turning points in the life of Moses and how these turning points influenced and had an impact on the people he was called to lead. There are five stories, four from the book of Exodus and one from the very last chapter of Deuteronomy. Each story comes at the beginning of a week and the remaining readings act as additional biblical material that sheds further light on the weekly theme being discussed and leads us into making comparisons between Moses and Jesus.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
1 Oct	Leading a disgruntled community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exodus 17: 1-7 2. Psalm 78: 1-4 3. Psalm 78: 12-16 4. Ezekiel 18: 1-4 5. Ezekiel 18: 25-32 6. Psalm 25: 1-8 7. Philippians 2: 1-13 	<p>Leading a disgruntled community is a challenging job. This week using the story found in Exodus 17: 1-7 and the following passages we explore leadership when faced with difficult situations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A story of people on the move; complaining, frustration and a cry for help. Leadership of God's people is never easy. 2. The psalmist invites God's people to learn from the stories of his past intervention in their lives. 3. The psalmist reminds us of the miracles that God has brought about. We need to look at the stories of God's intervention in our modern world. What are they? Can you think of one where God changed the direction of a nation? 4. God assures his people that everyone has to account for their own actions. How a man or woman decides to live is not determined by the actions of their parents. Does this cause us to reconsider the scriptural comment where we are told the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children? (see Exodus 20). 5. God justifies his reasoning - he longs for wrongdoers to change their ways and he warns righteous people to be careful not to turn away from doing good. 6. The psalmist asks God to show him the right path to take. Good will never lead us into disgrace. He asks that God will not remember his past sins. 7. Paul speaks of the unity and joy of working together for one purpose. He cites Jesus as our example of servanthood behaviour.

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8 Oct	No one is an island, we need community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exodus 20: 1-4 2. Matt 21: 23-32 3. Exodus 20: 7-9 4. Exodus 20: 12-20 5. Psalm 19 6. Isaiah 5:1-7 7. Psalm 80: 7-15 	<p>Leadership of a community calls for basic laws to maintain integrity and justice. Moses outlines the ten commandments as ground rules to establish a way for civil relationships to prosper. We explore a Christian perspective on the importance of community.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highlight the interpretation that wrongdoing affects the whole family. Our children may not be judged according to our wrongdoing but they may well be affected. 2. This parable is directed at those who appear to be religious and willing in words and outward appearances, but whose actions deny their commitment. 3. Introducing us to the concepts of holiness, reverence and respect. It is for our own good to understand the nature and purpose of holiness. When we speak God's name we enter into the sacred. When we make a day special we begin to live in the sacred. 4. The people have a great reverence and respect for God. Moses points out that it is this reverence that stops God's people from doing evil actions. 5. The psalmist reminds us that the whole of creation is holy and sacred and it is here to remind us of the majesty of God and in turn to speak to humanity of our high calling and purpose. We are called to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. 6. A song about the human condition. Why has the creation of God, which was made to produce people and communities of sweetness and light, produced bitter, sour, arrogant and angry people? (Sinéad O'Connor has written an album of songs around these verses). 7. The psalmist is crying to God to turn his face towards the people again. Without his favour there is no purpose in our lives.
15 Oct	Sustaining community is a daily exercise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exodus 32: 1-14 2. Psalm 106: 1-6 3. Psalm 106: 19-23 4. Isaiah 25: 1-9 5. Psalm 23 6. Philippians 4: 1-9 7. Matthew: 22. 1-14 	<p>In this week's key reading we see how easy it is for a community to be influenced by alternative ideas. In the absence of Moses, Aaron finds himself creating a golden calf which the people start worshipping. Consider modern day idols that have become part of our daily rituals and how we can resist the temptation to be seduced by a secular culture.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This passage highlights the weakness of human nature and the gracious heart of a forgiving God in love with his creation. 2. In this psalm we are reminded of the love of God that endures forever. To endure forever is a concept beyond our grasp. Yet God's love for his creation, men and women, is enduring, even through the times when we turn away from his presence. 3. Moses is seen as the mediator. For Christians Jesus is our mediator. He is the one who pleads our cause before God. 4. God is portrayed as a tower of refuge for the poor. He shelters those who are in distress and he pays attention to all who are in any need. 5. Here is a wonderful psalm that speaks to us all. It reminds us that God is truly the one who we can rely upon. He creates a home for us all. 6. A plea for God's people to live in peace. To trust God and not to worry about the future. 7. A parable about the greatest insult of all time. God's banquet being refused by those he has called friends. It also speaks of the act of grace. The banquet is opened to all.

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22 Oct	It is the presence of God that creates true community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exodus 33: 12-23 2. Psalm 99 3. Isaiah 45: 1-7 4. Psalm 96: 1-9 5. Psalm 96: 10-13 6. I Thessalonians 1: 1-10 7. Matthew 22: 34-46 	<p>Community and communion between people and God is a truly holy thing. Living in the presence of the Almighty is to be a people who are at peace with the world around. It was Brother Laurence who practiced the presence of Christ in all that he did - doing the washing up, cleaning the pots.</p> <p>God's presence journeys with his people. If Christ will not walk with us, if the Spirit will not talk with us, if the Father will not share his heart with us - then we are people who are spiritually dead. Like the psalmist we cry, "Take not your Spirit away from us".</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moses reveals that he needs to know the presence of the Lord close to him. God makes that promise but informs him that he can never truly know him, because it would be an impossible thing for the created being to know the creator completely. 2. This reminds us of the majesty and glory of God. He is just and righteous. It also reminds us that God's presence travels with his people. Jesus confirms this by the presence of the Holy Spirit. 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' 3. A wonderful passage that emphasises the inclusive nature of God. God will choose who he wills to fulfil his purposes. Cyrus may not know the God of Israel but the God of Israel knows him. We discover God is going to bless and prosper Cyrus to bring about his will. We need to be aware of the many people whom God is raising up in our communities to fulfil his plans. 4. God is doing something new every day. His people are called to sing a new song of praise to him. 5. The message is that all the nations are included in God's plan. He will judge all people fairly. God had an idea of a United Nations long before Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations. 6. In this passage Paul commends the Thessalonian congregation for being good witnesses to Christ. All of Greece are talking about their faith. "Let your light so shine." 7. Jesus teaches that loving God and loving our neighbour are the two central beliefs on which everything else is built.
29 Oct	Leadership has a shelf life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deuteronomy 34: 1-12 2. Psalm 90: 1-6 3. Psalm 90: 13-17 4. Leviticus 19: 1-2 5. Leviticus 19: 15-18 6. Psalm 1 7. I Thessalonians 2: 1-8 	<p>In the passage from Deuteronomy Moses faces the end of his ministry and public life. He makes way for a new leader. Explore the idea of bringing good things to an end.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarising the relationship God had with Moses. It is a summary that speaks of the visionary glimpsing the promise but never quite experiencing it. It also introduces Joshua as the next great leader of the travelling community. 2. The passing of Moses is a reminder to all that life is short. God is the everlasting one. 1000 years in his sight is like a watch of the night. Everything is limited and has a shelf life. The psalmist asks us to take stock of our time and measure it wisely. 3. This is a prayer to let the good time return in old age. Pray that God will take pity on his ageing people and turn their sadness into dancing. 4. God reminds the people to be holy because he is holy. 5. These verses echo the ten commandments and highlight the need for equal justice for all people. Not to seek revenge. Be careful how you use your tongue. 6. In this psalm the person who keeps God's law is happy and greatly blessed. 7. Paul discusses the motives for being apostles. Not for money, power or prestige. We are called to live holy and blameless lives.