

we like to say that the bible is important to us, we are a long way from being congregations which are devoted to the reading of Scripture. What on earth are we doing? Let me make three suggestions.

Firstly, do we really think that bible reading is boring? It may be that we're not hearing it read well. Good readers reflect on the passage and have a grasp of what it means. When reading aloud is done well it conveys meaning to the hearers.

Secondly, we may be tempted to think that meeting with God is better achieved by something other than God's word. Music can be an aid in our worship, but if all our efforts and time are taken up by singing, then music becomes the de-facto alternative to the reading of scripture. In many churches I have heard at least five and sometimes seven or more songs.

Thirdly, have we decided that time matters more than anything else? Many church leaders live in fear of "running overtime". Therefore they manage everything down to the very last minute or else that most fearful thing could happen: the congregation might get bored! But surely the tendency to curating every last second runs the risk of squeezing out the important for the efficient? Which brings me to my conclusion:

I suspect that we are starting to lose sight of the purpose of our gatherings. After all, we are not running a church service to save time (if that were the case, why have them at all?). No, what we are trying to do is build people up in their faith (Heb 10:24–25). This is all the harder to achieve, though, if everything we do is dragged through the same time-obsessed grid. Certainly, it's hard to be "devoted to the public reading of Scripture" in under 2 minutes!

We need to renew our focus on the public reading of the Bible. After all, when we hear the Bible read, God is speaking (2 Tim 3:16). If that is true, and the "thorough equipping" for Christian service (2 Tim 3:17) is our aim, then why don't we renew our devotion to Scripture being read well in our churches, and let the minutes fall where they may?

Collect

Loving God, your Son has chosen us and called us to be his friends: give us grace to keep his commandments, to love one another, and to bear fruit which will abide; through him who is the true vine, the source of all our life, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



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*Jesus said, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit.' [John 15:16]*

**Easter 6 (5<sup>th</sup> May)**

Acts 10:44-48

Psalm 98

1 John 5:1-6

**John 15:9-17**

**Easter 7 (12<sup>th</sup> May)**

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Psalm 1

1 John 5:9-13

**John 17:6-19**

**"Brace Yourselves!": The Reduction of Public Bible Reading**

TGCA 12/04/2024 Mike Fischer

I have recently returned as a missionary from my first term in another country, and may indeed be suffering from so-called 'reverse culture shock'. On the other hand, as I've travelled between supporting churches, I may be seeing a concerning change in our attitudes to bible reading.

Often I've been the guest preacher, and Revelation 7 has been my text. And so, as Bible readings before the sermon, I've asked for Revelation 7 along with a few short paragraphs from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. Now, these are not long passages. And they are certainly not boring! Yet, without blushing, one service leader politely asked me if the short Old Testament readings could be done away with, and Revelation 7 itself—not a long chapter!—be chopped in half.

The next weekend at a different church, and slotting in with the church's current series through an Old Testament book, I asked for a couple of extra paragraphs from that excellent Old Testament explainer, the book of Hebrews. Yet the comments made by the service leaders immediately before the Bible readings were revealing: "brace yourselves!", "bear with us!", and so on — as though something distinctly unpleasant was about to happen!

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul says: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Tim 4:13). While

## A guide for our prayers during the week

### Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes
- Dean for Cathedral – Rev. Ross Nicholson

### Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Ivy, Nancy, Chris

### Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Op Shop
- Blackwater
- Emerald Churches

### Thursday

Our nation and the gospel

- Prime minister
- State and local government
- Religious Freedom legislation

### Friday

God's world and the gospel

- Islamisation
- War and poverty
- Persecuted Church
- CMS and ABM

### Saturday

Ministry and the gospel

- Bible Studies
- Food for Body and Soul
- Wardens and Parish Council

### Dates to Remember

Today	Service at 4 pm Food for Body & Soul at 5.30 pm
7 May	Parish Council 4 pm
9 May	Bible study (Full of Promise)
25 May	Lay Preacher training Springsure 1-5 pm
26-29 May	Clergy Conference

	<b>5 May</b>	<b>12 May</b>
<b>Service Leader</b>	Larry	Russell
<b>Read</b>		
<b>Prayers</b>	Russell	Dianne
<b>Shop</b>	Donna & Dianne	Kaylene, Wayne, Jenni
<b>Grounds</b>		Phil

### The BCA Prayer

Lord our God, help us to remember those who live in isolated and remote parts of our land. We ask you to strengthen and encourage all whose ministries are supported by The Bush Church Aid Society.

Refresh them in times of discouragement and loneliness and call others to stand with them in the task of making Christ known.

Grant that, through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, through caring service and by support for young people, the message of your redeeming love may be proclaimed and accepted by the people of our land. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Direct Debit Giving Information

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