

## TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP  
PO Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790  
by John Fergeson

### Sunday, January 16

Ephesians 4:1-16 Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (v.3 NRSV)  
The last fifty years in church have been a real time of division and struggle. It seems to me that we spend a lot of time announcing who is “wrong” to our being “right”! I look at people during coffee hour. There always seem to be two small groups of people huddled together at opposite ends of the room, glaring at one another. It’s truly tragic and sad!

Paul teaches us that our baptisms have bound us together. We’re bound together so organically that he calls us the Body of Christ! Then what on earth are we doing glaring at each other, wishing that the “those” people on the other side of the room would disappear forever?

I believe if we’d walk to the opposite side of the room, greet our brothers and sisters with a smile, saying to them, “I miss you!”, we’d see the Holy Spirit at work, moving us together to start again toward unity.

Genesis 7:1-10, 17-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Mark 3:7-19

### Monday, January 17

Hebrews 4:14—5:6 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are... (v.15a)

I believe that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14) to share the experience of human life, not as a keen observer, but as a participant! That has been the most exciting, comforting and healing truth in my adult life.

I’m a USMC veteran of the Vietnam War. I’ve spent almost 30 years of my life working with other Vietnam veterans to help them deal with the spiritual issues and

moral injury that are the lasting result of their combat experience.

Over and over again, they’ve told me, “God can’t ever forgive me!” I tell them, “That’s not true! What this sentence of Scripture seeks to tell us is that God in Jesus Christ was right there with us, really sharing the fear, anger, and violence of the horrors of combat. God understands exactly. Through that shared experience, God will and has already forgiven us.”

The next time you feel that God will never understand the testing you’ve experienced, don’t turn to despair. Let Jesus embrace you with love—because he does understand exactly!

Genesis 8:6-22; Psalm 25; John 2:23—3:15

### Tuesday, January 18

Psalm 26 Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and mind. (v.2)

I do a daily devotion that leads me to recite most of the Psalms aloud over the course of several weeks. I confess that I cannot read Psalm 26 aloud, especially the verse above. Psalm 26 has a tone of self-righteousness that hurts my heart and soul.

Frankly, having God test my heart and mind, telling me what God finds as God “tries me” would be a painful experience, because I know that a lot of what God will find in me will be darkness, self-centeredness, and failure to trust God.

I’ve been blessed to have a Trappist monk for a spiritual guide for forty years. Whenever I shared with him some of what I’ve discovered deep within me, he has always said the same thing. “Good! The beginning of a deeper walk with God is discovering and knowing the real truth about yourself. Once you’ve started acknowledging that, you can begin learning to trust how deeply God loves you!”

Genesis 9:1-17; Psalm 28; Hebrews 5:7-14; John 3:16-21

### Wednesday, January 19

John 3:22-36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. (v.36a)

I often find myself believing that eternal life is a reward given for a life of participating in an obstacle course of rule following and righteous behavior. Actually, belief in Jesus Christ is the only requirement for obtaining eternal life. What we are called to do is to follow the Holy Spirit’s lead in living out eternal life in everyday life. This requires trusting the truth of what the above verse states is actually true for me, and all of us. God, the Holy Spirit, who dwells within our hearts and souls, knows more about us than we can ever know about ourselves. Therefore, we have to learn to listen to the Spirit’s prompting.

What’s difficult for me is that I have to keep myself from believing that I’m actually in control of my transformation into becoming an icon of Christ. This is actually harder work than rule following and righteous behavior! The gift or eternal life has already been given to us. Our spiritual life is living into the already given gift we have received.

Genesis 9:18-29; Psalm 38; Hebrews 6:1-12

### Thursday, January 20

Hebrews 6:13-20 Where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered (v.20)

One of the great truths of our Christian Faith is that forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended to the Father. Slicing through all the technical theology, what that means is our human nature (which is part of Jesus Christ) went along to dwell with the Father. Put another way, the separation between God and humanity no longer exists. That’s incredibly wonderful news!

Because we are baptized into union with Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ has taken our humanity into inseparable union with God, we are always with God, and God is always with us. I know this truth, but I still spend time trying to figure out how to connect with a distant God. The fact is that God is right there with all of us. God loves us. God wants to have a deeply personal relationship with each of us. If you want God’s attention and help, just start talking! God is there waiting with amazing loving kindness and gentle power. Amen! Alleluia!

Genesis 11:1-9; Psalm 37:1-18; John 4:1-15

#### **Friday, January 21**

Psalm 31 You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me. (v.3)  
A few months ago, I was driving my friend Tom home after a church meeting. He was very quiet throughout the ride. Finally, he said, "John, I want to tell you something."

He took a deep breath and said, "John, I'm afraid of God! I read all those stories in the Bible about God being angry, and punishing and even killing people, because they sinned! I've done my share of breaking the Ten Commandments. I'm scared that someday God is going to punish me!"

I responded, "Tom, the whole point of the Good News of Jesus Christ is that God loves all of us. Jesus came among us, died, and rose from the dead so that sins could be forgiven and we could have a new relationship with God no matter how often we ask—a permanent relationship of love, hope, forgiveness, and healing. I told him I was betting my life that what I'd just said is true for all of us! We can trust God not to hurt us!"

Genesis 11:27—12:8; Hebrews 7:1-17; John 4:16-26

#### **Saturday, January 22**

Hebrews 7:18-28 Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (v.25)  
As I listen to people talk about salvation, I often hear them talk about salvation in a conditional way. They say that Jesus saves us, but we can lose our salvation because we sin. Those statements bother my soul—because I don't believe that salvation is conditional. I believe salvation comes to us in the new birth through the water and indwelling of the Holy Spirit than comes to us in Baptism.

The Prayer Book my Christian Tradition uses states, "The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble." One of the promises people make at their Baptism is this: "Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?" Those

preparing to be baptized respond, "I will with God's help."

Part of the gifts of Baptism is that we are incorporated into the way into the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. I believe Salvation isn't conditional. Saved is saved! The love of God for us isn't conditional. I trust this with all my heart and soul!

Genesis 12:9—13:1; Psalms 30, 32; John 4:27-43

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer we pray for the Church of England

In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer we pray for St. Michael's, Arlington, St. Philip's, Richmond, Trinity, Fredericksburg

#### **CURRENT PRAYER LIST**

Adam, Becky, Betty Jo, Bob, Bonnie, Caroline, Cathy, Connie, Craig, Dan, David, Davis, Debbie, Deborah, Debra, Dee, Doris, Erik, Frank, James, Janet, John, Jon, Kathleen, Laura, Lisa, Mara, Marci, Marilyn, Mario, Michael, Mike, Nancy, Nanette, Nick, Paula, Phil, Rachel, Ray, Raymond, Rich, Richard, Robert, Rusty, Samantha, Shannon, Sharon, Sharon D., Sonja, Tom, Vaughan, Veronica, Wendy, Wesley, Anne R. Adams, Dave Adams, Susan Anderson, Chuck B., Anne Barge, Maria Barnhart, Michael Barrett, Waldo Beck, Kevin Byrne, Angie Campbell, John Crigler, Desiree Daniels, Alda Dell, Robin Dournaux, Neil Edwards, Bill & Pat Farr, Allan & Holly Feliciano, Pearle Galatas, Rose Gallup, Dorothy Gassel, Alice Glover, Tony Griswold, Barbara Harkins, Emily Hinkley, Rachel Hoffman, Barry Holliday, Edward Homendy, David Hunt, Russ Kidd, Scott Kizner, Sophie Manning, Karen Maxey, Jack McGraw, Godwin Nosa, Heather Cameron Ploen, Winifred Relyea, Tina Revis, David Roberts, Danny Sass, Marianne Simpson, Anne Smith, Denise Symonds, Sherry Tanner, John Thompson, May Jane Tillman, Susy Vargas-Soliz, Teara & Caia Venaglia, James Monroe Walls, Kelly Weber, Alda White, Jean Wilbur, Alva Windham

#### **BIRTHDAYS -**

January 16th - Auden Gray  
January 18th - Dick Ayres, BG Erb  
January 20th - Finn Benthem  
January 23rd - Matthew Brewer  
January 25th - Pat Weber  
January 26th - Donald Erskine  
January 27th - Mark Bennett, Michael Homendy  
January 28th - Marti Harrington  
January 29th - Allan Feliciano

#### **ANNIVERSARY -**

January 28th - Randall and Sug Clingenpeel

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS -**

January 16th - Breakfast with the Bishop 9:30 am via Facebook Live, Bishop Goff's Visitation 10:30 am via Facebook Live  
January 17th - Grief Support Group 10:30 am (Lounge)  
January 18th - Tuesday Night Outreach 5:00 pm  
January 19th - RBG Book Group 10:00 am (Library), Daughters of the King 6:30 pm (via Zoom)

*Monday through Friday - Morning Prayer 6:30 am, Compline 8:30 pm - via Facebook Live*

