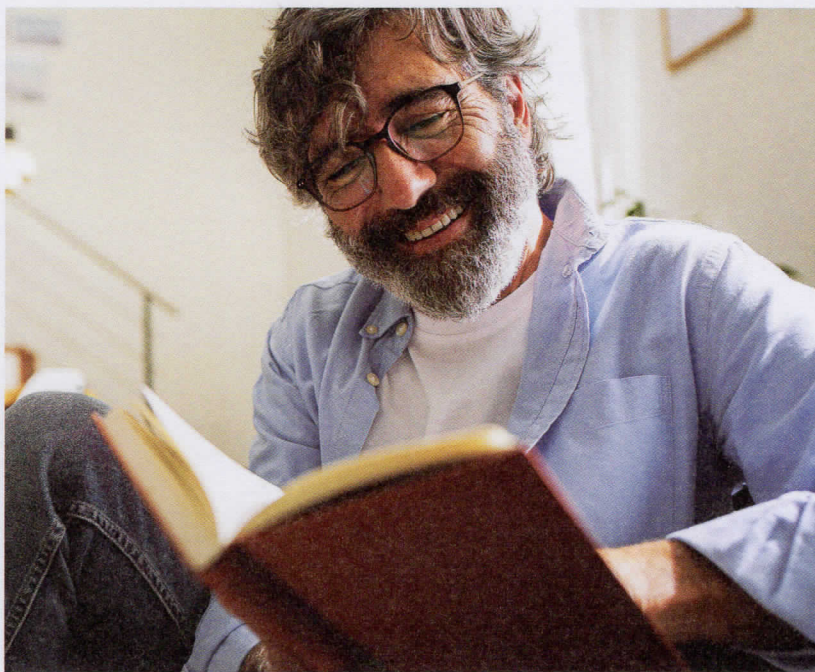


A book full of hope

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Nehemiah 8:1-4a [5-6] 8-12

“For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.” So the book of Nehemiah tells us. The people are the returned exiles, back in Jerusalem, beginning to rebuild their life as the people of God in new and difficult circumstances. The city and Temple are in ruins and there are enemies all around. They need something to bring them together and give them new courage and purpose. So they gather, and their religious leader Ezra reads to them from the book of the Law of Moses, probably what we know as the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy. At first they weep. We may guess that they realise how far they and their ancestors have departed from God’s Law, and how their disobedience has led to their current predicament. But then they rejoice; God’s promises still hold good, and therefore there is a future for God’s people.

On this Bible Sunday we are reminded that the scriptures both challenge and encourage us. They remind us how far we have failed to live up to our calling as God’s people. But they also give us a hope which lies not in our own efforts but in God’s eternal promises. ☺



The Common Worship Lectionary

Part 4 – weekday readings and daily worship

by Connor Hurley

While Sundays attract most attention, the *Common Worship Lectionary* also includes a pattern of weekday readings designed to support Morning and Evening Prayer. The weekday cycle isn’t as closely linked to the seasons as the Sunday one, so readers get a broader sweep of scripture. These readings often move straight through books, providing a sense of continuity. For instance, a few weeks in Ordinary Time might take you steadily through Acts

or Genesis. The intent is practical rather than lofty – regular practice shapes understanding. A verse such as Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship,” becomes more vivid and meaningful when it’s read in context.

Some churches study these readings in small groups or use them in weekday services; others encourage individuals to follow them at home. In this way, the *Common Worship Lectionary* keeps the Bible close to our everyday life, not just the major festivals or Sunday gatherings. ☺

“Your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth.”

Psalms 48:10

We give you thanks, Lord, for the scriptures which challenge and inspire us. Help us to read and listen with openness and humility; that we may understand afresh the task you have given us as your people, and of your promises that guarantee its fulfilment. Amen.

What’s in a name?

Mary

by Caroline Hodgson

In an occasional series, Caroline Hodgson takes a look at names derived from scripture.

“The name of Mary is the key to the gates of heaven,” said St Ephrem the Syrian. Indeed, Mary is among the world’s most recognisable, if not the most fashionable names. Last year it was number 208 in the worldwide name “charts”, showing its enduring appeal, particularly in Christian families.

The many variations of the name include Marie, Maria

and Mairi. Scholars disagree as to the Hebrew origin of the name, with some suggesting it means “beloved” or “star of the sea,” or that it might even hold connotations of bitterness.

The most famous Mary of all is introduced in Luke’s Gospel (1:27) with the simple words: “The virgin’s name was Mary.” Of course it is due to her that the name spread rapidly through Christian communities and then across continents, although it didn’t come into common usage in Ireland until the seventeenth century, as it was considered too holy to be used for an ordinary baby. ☺