



The Church of the Good Shepherd, Brighton

# Growing in Faith



Autumn 2025

Welcome to the first part of our new teaching programme “Growing in Faith”. This booklet tells you what’s going on between September and December 2025. We have different groups available meeting at different times and places, and covering a wide range of topic. Some sessions are standalone, while others form part of a wider series. All of our groups are suitable to dip in and out of and to fit around other commitments you might have. All of our groups are suitable for people who are completely new to theology.

## **Sunday Snippets**

Our short teaching session to introduce you to a wide variety of topics. These meet for around half an hour on a Sunday morning - starting around 11.30am and finishing at about noon. Grab your coffee and biscuit and say hello to your friends, then meet at the Redeemer Chapel for some short snappy exploration of the Bible, Church History, Prayer, Liturgy and so much more. You’ll be home in plenty of time for lunch.

## **Bible Study**

Our weekly Bible Study that allows for a much deeper exploration of scripture. The group goes at its own pace, and there’s plenty of time for questions and discussion. Meets on Zoom each Monday at 10.15am (Zoom opens for ‘coffee’ at 9.45am). See Fr Mathew for the link.

## **Courses**

Our Autumn and Lent courses spend a number of weeks looking more deeply into a particular topic. Meets on a Thursdays, both after the 10.30am Eucharist and at 7.30pm.

Our Autumn Course this year is called “**Heresies and how to avoid them**” based on the book of the same name. Each week

we'll be exploring a bit about the history of the Early Church, through the battles to decide what Christians believe, and what they do not. And far from being a thing of the past, some of these heresies are alive and well in the church today. The whole book will be available to those who want it, but it's not necessary to read it to take part.

## **Book Group**

Our most in-depth group. Each month we read a theological text, and then meet to discuss what we've read. You don't need any prior knowledge, but you will need to feel confident in reading a book (up to about 200 pages) in the lead up to the group, and be prepared for some slightly more academic theology and discussion. You don't need to come every month - you can just pick books you fancy. All are widely available, and we will organise group deliveries to church. Meeting in the evenings, time and place will be decided among those who sign up.

# September

## Sunday Snippets

**Sundays: 11.30 - 12 noon**

## Around the Church

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September - What's on the Altar?

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September - Vestments

## Book Group

"Silence and Honey Cakes: The Wisdom of the Desert" by Rowan Williams

*"Rowan Williams goes back to the 4th century desert fathers and mothers for inspiration and insight, discovering that their spirituality resonates strongly with aspects of the modern spiritual search. He uses examination of their stories and sayings as a starting point for his own reflections on topics such as: living in relationship with others; discovering the truth about ourselves; reassessing our priorities; silence and the importance of language; living in a fearless community; living within our limitations; life and death; staying and leaving."*

# October

## **Sunday Snippets**

**Sundays: 11.30 - 12 noon**

### **Around the Church**

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October - Sit, Stand, Kneel

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October - The Lectionary

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October - The Intercessions

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October - Incense

## **Autumn Course**

**Thursdays: 11am (church) and 7.30pm (place tbc)**

### **Heresies and How to Avoid Them**

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October - Arianism: Is Jesus divine and eternal or was he created?

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October - Docetism: Is Jesus really human or did he just appear to be so?

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October - Adoptionism: Is Jesus Christ the Son of God by nature or by adoption?

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October - Theopaschitism: Is Jesus able or unable to suffer in his divine nature?

## **Book Group**

“Temple Theology: An Introduction” by Margaret Barker

*Margaret Barker believes that Christianity developed so quickly because it was a return to far older faith - far older than the Greek culture that is long-held to have influenced Christianity. Temple Theology explains that the preaching of the gospel and the early Christian faith grew out of the centuries' old Hebrew longing for God's original Temple. These longings form the basis of the Old Testament exile theology and cause us reassess the relationship between Christianity and the Hebrew tradition. This is no fundamentalist work harking back to the idea that 'the oldest is the purest' Rather it is recognition that the Old Testament has a complex heritage and that those who shared this heritage did not share the same beliefs or scriptures - amongst these people were the first Christians. In her exploration of temple theology, Margaret Barker finds clear references and beliefs in fundamental Christian concepts such as atonement, creation and covenant. This is a thorough and fascinating exploration of the theology of the original Jewish Temple.*

**November**

## **Sunday Snippets**

**Sundays: 11.30 - 12 noon**

### **The Ecumenical Creeds**

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November - The Nicene Creed

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November - The Apostles Creed

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November - The Athanasian Creed

## Autumn Course

**Thursdays: 11am (church) and 7.30pm (place tbc)**

### Heresies and How to Avoid Them

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November - Marcionism: Can Christians dispense with the God of the Old Testament?

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November - Palagianism: Can people be saved by their own efforts?

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November - Gnosticism: Can people be saved by acquiring secret knowledge?

### Book Group

“The Return of the Prodigal Son” by Henri Nouwen

*In this Church Times ‘Top 100 Best Christian Book’, a chance encounter with a reproduction of Rembrandt’s painting, The Return of the Prodigal Son, catapulted Henri Nouwen into a long spiritual adventure. He shares the deeply personal meditation that led him to discover the place within which God has chosen to dwell. In seizing the inspiration that came to him through Rembrandt’s depiction of the powerful Gospel story, Nouwen probes the several movements of the parable: the younger son’s return, the father’s restoration of sonship, the elder son’s vengefulness, and the father’s compassion. In his reflection on Rembrandt in light of his own life journey, the author evokes the powerful drama of the parable in a rich, captivating way. The themes of homecoming, affirmation, and reconciliation will be newly discovered by all who have known loneliness, dejection, jealousy, or anger. The challenge to love as the father and be loved as the son is represented with new freshness and vigour for our times.*

# December

## Book Group

“Discovering Matthew” by Ian Boxall

For a January meeting.

*This introduction to the interpretation of Matthew aims to encourage in-depth study of the text, and genuine grappling with the theological and historical questions raised, by providing a ‘map’ to the Gospel as a whole, and to key interpreters and interpretative debates. It draws on a range of methodological approaches (author-, text- and reader-centred), as complementary rather than mutually exclusive ways of interpreting the text.*

*In particular, this new introduction reflects the growing scholarly attention to the reception history of biblical texts, increasingly viewed as a vital aspect of interpretation rather than an optional extra.*