

## Home group notes w/b 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014

## All Saints

Read Col 1:1-5 (or a bit of 6 depending on the version you are reading!)

**To whom is Paul's letter addressed?** Compare different Bible versions if you can. (Eg. New Living; Message; NIV).

*Paul commonly starts his letters like this. Have a look at 1 Cor 1:1-3 and Phil 1:1-2.*

The letters are often addressed to the 'hagioi' – variously translated as 'God's people', 'the Christians set apart', 'the holy people'. This is the word also translated as 'saints'. So yes, we are all saints!

**Another common word** is 'ekklesia' – the church which is made up of all the saints, which crops up in 1 Cor 1:1-3. Can you think of any helpful responses to people who say 'I believe in God, I call myself a Christian, but I don't go to church'?

It is also helpful for us to learn from those people who have gone before us in faith. These saints may be people in the New Testament or people from more recent times who have lived as Christians and about whom we know. Some are obvious heroes; others – like some of the disciples, are just a name.

*In church tradition, a 'saint' can only be made by the Catholic church, and there are various tests applied. The Anglican church then just adopts them, but the modern lectionary includes many others – 'saints and martyrs of Asia' for example – who have not gone through the official process, but whose example is clearly recognised.*

**Which New Testament characters** do you especially relate to and why? Here are some for starters, but you may already feel close to others: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, Matthew, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well in John 4, Paul, Timothy, Barnabas, Lydia...

**Now think of some other people** of the faith from more recent times. Who are the people who are no longer alive but who have helped you in your faith? Share them, even if they are only names written down – you can incorporate them later in prayer.

**Imagine you are writing a letter**, in the NT style, to the saints in Taunton. How would you start? What would the next bit be after the greeting? Would it be like Col 1:3-4 or Phil 1:3-6? Or more like Gal 1:6-7 or 1 Cor 1:10-12? What things do you rejoice about, and what issues would you want to be addressed? Can we start to do anything about these?

The day before All Saints Day (1<sup>st</sup> November) is All Saints Eve or Halloween. The day after is All Souls Day, when many Christians find it helpful to remember people who have gone before them and have now died, and to give thanks for them. You might like to list them, personally.

Put on a piece of quiet music, turn the lights down, and give your lists of names to one person to read out leaving plenty of time for each one. Light some night lights if that helps you as you give thanks. Don't be afraid of tears if they come, you are among the saints in your home group. Leave time to add silently those people still alive who have been a help with your faith.

Then move on from thanksgiving to pray for people now who are in need, or about whom you are anxious. Light more candles if you wish. You don't need to name these out loud unless you want to do so. Don't forget those undergoing very hard times elsewhere in the world.

If quietness is unusual for your group, try it this time. If it is outside your comfort zone as leader, be brave. Then pray the Lord's prayer together to finish.