

Steadfast love

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on* Psalm 26

The psalms form a unique part of the Bible. In the fourth century, St Athanasius said that the whole of human life could be found within them. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther said the psalms contain the whole of scripture. They are our prayer book, and they were Jesus' prayer book, too. During October, we are going to see what the appointed psalms may say to us.

We start with Psalm 26, which contains lines of intimate, loving prayer, as well as a surprising conviction of personal integrity. Integrity is about living a life of coherence – where there is no difference between what we say and what we do. Jesus modelled such a life and we are called to so as well. For the writer of this psalm, an unwavering trust in God may be what makes this kind of life possible, giving a solid foundation in a world of bribery, evil and bloodthirsty desire. Whatever else may be going on, life is a journey with and towards God.

This writer consciously sets the "steadfast love" of God before their eyes, as they deal with all the challenges and injustices of daily life. In this love, and by this trust, we too may find God's glory and our own true selves. ☺



Faithful God, may we set your steadfast love before our eyes, as we journey through our lives; and when our trust wavers, take us by the hand and turn us back to you. Amen.

Holy Places *Malmesbury Abbey*

by Heather Smith

A small market town, Malmesbury is an attractive place for a pilgrim. Approaching from the south you travel up the steep High Street as it bends round towards the crossroads at Abbey Row, with its fifteenth-century market cross. Behind it lies the abbey gateway which leads you into the churchyard and gives a stunning view of the west side of the church with its beautiful carved stone entrance. The nave is all that is

left of the once extensive abbey buildings, covered with bullet marks made during the English Civil War.

The large building dominates the small town and in its heyday must have been impressive. Dating from the twelfth century it is the third structure to stand on the site. During his time as abbot, St Aldhelm, the first saint of Wessex (born c. 639), replaced the wooden building with a large complex of stone buildings. Step inside and you are greeted by a broad space. Although Aldhelm himself did not see the current structure, you can be transported back in time, imagining the monks silently going about their business. ☺

Walking with Poppy *Alongside*

by Gillian Cooper

It's autumn, and there is damp in the air and on the ground. As she gets older, Poppy becomes even more reluctant to get her paws wet. She sees puddles on the path and retreats into the house. The morning walk becomes a matter of commanding (futile)

and cajoling (not much better) – until we meet her friend Roly. Then she forgets all about the damp and trots along happily beside him.

We have a God who walks alongside us. Our God is not distant and aloof, too powerful to be concerned with us. Our God made the earth for us, breathed us into life, came and lived in our world, gave us the Spirit to be with us for ever and in the end calls us home. Whether we feel it or not, we have a companion on our journey, in whose presence puddles become streams of living water. ☺

“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Matthew 6:8