

Christian Aid Bibliothon Participants' Reflections

Kate Price

I had 2 slots during the Bibliothon. One at 7 am and one at 8 pm. I could hardly sleep the night before and realised I was nervous! (Wonderful to feel performance nerves again during the dearth of the arts caused by Covid 19. Performers thrive on them!)

Slight panic at 6.45 as I come into the ZOOM room. Where are we? I see the reassuring note in the "chat" from Martin that we are to start at Matthew 23. My partner Robin and I settle down. There is a wonderfully taut connection between Robin and me as we alternate chapter after chapter through the end of Matthew and the beginning of Mark (a connection that I found later with my second partner). And you DON'T relax when you are not reading. You allow yourself a sip of water. Your ears are filled with the exquisite words of the King James version or the NRSV, and your eyes centre on the icon of the microphone on the screen with the tantalising question: when should I unmute? I listen to my husband John as he takes over for the next hour. Throughout the day, one dips into the reading of others via the good offices of YouTube. And then it is time at 8pm for the second reading. Szabina and I canter briskly (we had been told to pick up the pace) through the letters of Paul to the Ephesians, Thessalonians and Philippians. I come up against the mind of Paul more intimately than ever before. The robust language of the King James version propels us on. We get into the rhythm: it almost takes us over like the flight of the Windhover in Gerard Manley Hopkins' famous poem:

..... in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him

My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Again and again, Paul reminds us of what Christ has done for us, of the power of forgiveness and of God's love. I stay up to watch more. I admire the resilience of our friend Howard who started at 5 am and it is now after midnight (and Revelation is not an easy book!). We gather at 12.30 in the "room" exhausted but exhilarated. When can we do it again?

Robin Miller

I really enjoyed the challenge of being part of this project. I was taken by the beauty of the language and the power of the story telling- I was lucky to have a wonderful section of St Matthew to read (including the Last Supper and the Resurrection). It definitely made me want to read the New Testament more. It was exciting to be part of this and I feel it was a great achievement.

Paul Fairhall

I felt very privileged to take part. Before starting I was apprehensive about making a clean join from the previous reader, as it was important to maintain the flow, but Martin looked after continuity very well. I felt very humbled to be reading Mark's account of the Passion, and Luke's telling of the Annunciation. Humbled and honoured to take part. A great evangelisation initiative.

Szabina Soptei

Reading the chapters from the New Testament by alternating until coming to the end was real teamwork. We read it aloud not just for ourselves but for each and everyone who may watch it on Youtube. This was not only a reading out exercise. We wanted to "spread" the message, carefully stressing those parts which we thought may speak to the current situation and the mission of Christian Aid we supported. Although we joined from different places locked down in our rooms but we were together not only virtually but spiritually as well, and Jesus Christ was with us as he said: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them".

Dorothy Lawrence

I found the whole experience rewarding and quite unique. I really enjoyed hearing the different versions of the text. It was a great opportunity to read David's huge family bible. I personally prefer the King James version as I like the poetry in the text. It is more power in the language. It was great to actually see something through at this time when it is hard to complete anything.

Harriet Plyler

It was wonderful to be part of such a worthy project and to know that giving so little of myself could add to the aggregate with such nice results. But of course, the best thing was that thing that always happens when you spend a large chunk of time reading any part of the Bible...the expanded knowledge, understanding, and spiritual bump you get all to yourself. Also nice to add to the international flair of the occasion!

Cathy Fox

I was totally surprised by my reaction to the bibliathon as I wasn't keen on a whole day of bible reading- this did not sound appealing to me at all! However, I accidentally woke early so thought I'd log on and watch while waking up gently. Within about 10 minutes, Martin had persuaded me to read (I was in pyjamas!) and then I was hooked. I still had to work during the day but whenever I had a break, I was logging in to hear what was going on. I was enjoying the drama of the stories and to hear the bible spoken by friends and strangers felt like we were all connected and all part of this story. I just felt really alive throughout the day and honestly wanted to do it again the next day! I'm not sure those who started at 5am were up for that though!

Howard Redgwell

The thought of reading the New Testament in its entirety in less than one day is daunting, but is a wonderful challenge. I look on the reading as being similar to watching plants grow and flower, but one that never withers and dies. We are never sure how the plant will look before it starts germinating and growing, but when it blooms you realise that it is the incarnation of perfection. The reading of the New Testament on Saturday comprises a diversity of books, ranging from the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, James and John and, of course, Revelation. Reading, listening and reflection throughout the day, felt as if the different stories and teachings in the New Testament had been fashioned to be one, and the entirety brought a unity and a coherent explanation to all of the scriptures to which we had read or listened. Sharing the reading with all of our community at All Hallows enriched the experience of the day.

David Risley

What a day! I tuned in as soon as I woke up, shortly after 6am. I was excited to see that the Bibliothon was under way. I followed at intervals throughout the day checking in about every half hour. The Youtube live link was very good.

I was quite nervous when my time to read at 3pm came, the texts are quite challenging in parts and there's a few tongue twisters as well, what with technical issues also it felt as if I was just about hanging in there, I enjoyed being paired with Harriet in Florida, how amazing is that! It was lovely to see Sarah Finch later, she is an actress and a beautiful Christian soul we were pleased she took up the challenge. I must admit I was flagging by about 8 o'clock, just watching, but stuck with it. Came back to life as the last few chapter's came into view John, Jude, Peter and Revelation. I was very happy to have the opportunity to read again, I figured folk would all be flagging a bit so thought I better stick around in the Zoom room. What a great achievement and what opportunities this lockdown zooming is offering. I think it is safe to say we are all Christian Zoomies now. Thank you for getting us all involved

Tracey and Morgause Worth

Still with six pips it began at 5am, Reading the entire New Testament of the bible without stopping. The first words of St Matthew's gospel, then, a whole lot of pips later, at about half past midnight concluded Revelation. All 27 books of the New Testament in their entirety over nearly 20 hours, in a plethora of historic and contemporary translations.

Mummy used her Auntie Greta's bible, a childhood gift marked 1962, Morgause focused on her school bible from Repton. All Hallows set the task because they believe the New Testament is good news for the poor, adding a fund raising package so many of you helped with support Christian Aid to raise over £1,500. Taking turns in swaps between verses in chapter order co-ordinated between You Tube and Zoom. Morgause at the head of the tech team in the North while I lobbied via You Tube in the South. Cousin Paul, Middle England joined from Derby while chums popped up from our travels around the World to look in, smile, wave and zoom a thumbs up. Life in the new norm.

Martin Carr

When I first said to Katherine 'why don't we read the entire New Testament on Zoom for Christian Aid' I'm not sure at the time I quite realised what I was suggesting. Even having assembled a big rota, set up the fundraising page and sat down in front of Zoom at 5am, it wasn't quite real. But as the project began to take on its own life during the day as the pairs of readers got into their stride, what a blessing I realised we were all part of.

It was incredible to involve so many talented readers, and at any time I could see we had 10-15 people watching via Youtube too. Tweets were going out, and the Justgiving page was slowly climbing towards our target.

The New Testament is surely good news for the poor, and we were all proud to support Christian Aid, as witnessed by the plethora of logos on display in the Zoom room.

A little after midnight a hardy team of Zoomers pushed through the final chapters of Revelation to its conclusion. I was very emotional – friends, faith and charity coming together in the astonishing and challenging words of Scripture. Thank you everyone who was involved.