



The Bible, for everyone, every day



An introduction to Bible Month

This guide is designed to help you understand more about Bible Month and to equip you to run Bible Month in your church and circuit.

Bible Month is an annual opportunity for the whole Methodist Connexion to *feast* on one particular book of the Bible together.

Through a *menu* of carefully curated resources, training and learning opportunities, churches and circuits are encouraged to taste and see the goodness of an individual Bible text; enjoying some of its particular characteristics, considering its origins, appreciating its place alongside the rest of Scripture, and savouring the unique contribution it might make to our faithful living and learning today.

Why Bible Month?

Noticing God in Scripture is one part of A Methodist Way of Life. Bible Month is a core element of our strategy to equip and enable everyone in our churches to do just that.

Biblical Literacy

The Methodist Church believes that the revelation of God is recorded in all of Scripture, and so we want to help people read as widely as possible. Sometimes we deliberately select books of the Bible that are less familiar. We use these lesser-known parts of the Bible as a case study for honing our reading skills, learning how to approach and appreciate different texts, all in the interest of growing our faith, understanding and biblical literacy. We like to think of it as a chance to stretch and refine our *theological palates*.

For Everyone... We believe that the Bible is God's gift to all, and so we want to help the whole Church feel equipped to read it with confidence and the expectation of finding God within. We anticipate that local preachers, worship leaders and lay and ordained workers will most likely take responsibility for making

Bible Month happen in any given part of the Connexion. As such, this guide and some of the key aspects of our annual menu of resources and learning opportunities are aimed at that group.

However, we want to make sure Bible Month equips and encourages everyone in our churches to engage with the text and hope that those facilitating Bible Month *on the ground* do so in a way that invites people to discover, explore and reflect on the text for themselves. The Bible is meant to be shared together, and so the Bible Month resources offered each year are an invitation for everyone to enjoy a place at that table.

Every day... We believe that the Bible isn't just for Sunday, or just for four weeks of the year – it is there for us every day. The annual Bible Month campaign is a concentrated season for us to all come to the table, *feast* on the Bible together and refine our *theological palates*, with the view that what we celebrate, practice, discover and enjoy over those four weeks will continue to shape, form and encourage our faith and understanding throughout the rest of the year.

Bible Month resources

Each year we create a new *menu* of resources and learning opportunities to help churches and circuits engage with our chosen book:

- **30 Days booklet:** At the heart of Bible Month is the **30 Days with...** booklet, produced in partnership with the *Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust* (LWPT). This contains an accessible, scholarly introduction to the chosen book of the Bible, as well as a whole month's worth of preaching and teaching notes, small group study guides, worship ideas and reflective articles.

- **Training Days:** Run by the Learning Network in the first quarter of the calendar year, these training days equip worship leaders and local preachers with all that they need to roll out Bible Month in their churches and circuits.

"One of the most encouraging and thought provoking Methodist training sessions I've been on for a long time"

"Excellent event – learned so much and beyond what I expected"

- **Reading Guide:** A guide to help people read through the whole of the chosen book in 30 days. Each daily reading has a brief introduction to orient people to that day's text and open up their thoughts and reflections.
- **Videos:** In each campaign we produce a number of videos for churches to put on social media and play during services. These might be animations, interviews or presentations from scholars.

They may be used by different audiences in different ways, but all are designed to increase understanding and reflection on the text and engagement and interest with Bible Month. All our videos can be found on our YouTube channel: youtube.com/biblemonth

- **Journalling Kit:** For those who want to get creative and crafty, this printable journalling kit contains words and graphics that can be cut out and stuck into a Bible or journal as a way of helping people reflect on and present their thoughts about a text. For those new to Bible journalling, we've prepared some how-to videos to help them get started. You can find them at youtube.com/biblemonth

- **Webinars:** Often run during the month of June, these webinars are designed to stoke interest and reflection. Hosted by the Learning Network, with contributions from a variety of guests, these sessions are open to all and consider different ways of reading, understanding, learning from and living out the text.

"Really good range of speakers covering different material but drawing out the links between their segments. Good discussion questions that got you thinking"

"The evening was incredibly enlightening and thought provoking. All the speakers were thorough and engaging"

Which month is Bible Month?



To avoid clashing with Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and the summer holidays, the Connexional Bible Month campaign runs during **June**, with various resources and training opportunities timed accordingly. However, it is

possible for churches to choose a different month in the year in which to engage with the materials if that works better for their local calendars and needs, and many churches and circuits opt to do so.

How to implement Bible Month in your church



The following are some top tips on how to make the most of Bible Month in your local context. Remember, the aim is to help equip those in your churches and circuits in their ability to notice God in Scripture; helping make the Bible something for everyone, every day.

- **Team building**

Gather those who are going to lead during Bible Month and make sure you are all on the same page in terms of what Bible Month is and when it is going to happen.

Many circuits buy bulk copies of the **30 Days with...** booklet to give copies to minsters, preachers, worship leaders and other key leaders.

Think about whether or not you might use Bible Month as an opportunity to experiment with things that you might not normally do. Can you find a way to include some of the intergenerational worship activities? Can you give people the opportunity to enjoy some of the small group discussions? Can you make use of the Reading Guide and encourage people to follow the daily readings so that the whole community works through the text together? Consider how you're going to help your context fully engage with all that Bible Month has to offer.

- **Plan making**

Superintendents will need to discuss and decide whether Bible Month works across the circuit plan for all churches or is left to individual churches to run. You can indicate on the plan which will be Bible Month week 1, and so on. It might be hard to manage a straight run of four Sundays that do not clash with special services for every church in the circuit; as long as Bible Month weeks 1-4 are identified for each church it doesn't matter too much if they aren't all synchronised. You will also need to decide what to do if there are 'Own Arrangement' services without an assigned preacher.

- **Promoting**

Make sure that your churches and circuits know that they are engaging in a campaign alongside

thousands of others from across the Connexion. Mention Bible Month in your newsletters, from the pulpit and on social media, so that people know that it is coming. Download the media pack from methodist.org.uk/biblemonth and make use of the images, logos, videos, fonts, templates and branding materials. Signpost people to the various resources, materials and learning opportunities on offer.

- **Preaching**

Make sure that those who are going to be preaching or worship leading during Bible Month are familiar with the resources available to them. Discuss the materials together and consider what you might use during services. You might want to have a special local preachers meeting to tune into the Local Preacher and Worship Leader Training Day together. Check out the *Singing the Faith* hymn suggestions that have been collated to complement Bible Month.

Make sure that each sermon is recognisably part of the same series and compliments the others. It is best that those preaching focus on their particular chapters/theme without too much overlap. Consider using the preaching points from the **30 Days with...** booklet to help structure sermons; don't think that you have to cover a quarter of the book in question in your sermon! Encourage people to engage with the text itself through your choice of readings.

Remember that some of the people in the congregation may be following the Reading Guide and will be interested to see how their readings tie in with the sermon. Maybe make a space in the service to ask them what they discovered in the previous week?

Testimonials

"I have used the Bible Month materials ever since the launch and have really been encouraged as the resources grew each year – offering ideas, resources and wider biblical knowledge from scholars that have helped both myself and the congregations that I serve grow in understanding and outworking. As someone who likes to engage with others, the study days have been a highlight – especially when I already think I have discovered all that the text has to offer."

Kim Shorley, presbyter

"I have been involved with Bible Month since 2016, running small groups across this small but scattered circuit of Ayrshire and Renfrewshire.

The short four-week course was sufficient to whet the appetite for further small group sessions and we have continued to use this method for other small group sessions across the circuit and adapted it for Zoom.

Bible Month material has been helpful, informative and well received, offering opportunities for questions and discussion. One of the joys of participating in Bible Month has been to discover together that even familiar books of the Bible have so much more to teach us."

Kathleen Pearson, local preacher