

On Saturday 28th September 2019 the St James' Institute and Anglicans Together hosted a workshop presented by Jim Brown on 'Church Renewal and Everyday Spirituality' drawing on material from his new book, *Living Well in the Presence of God: Everyday Spirituality for the 21st Century*.

After the seminar we received much positive feedback. I have included some below.

"He is the real thing; authentic, truthful, inspired and inspiring."

"Jim was so brave in sharing and giving so much of himself. What a blessing it was to learn from him and to hear his perspectives on how we might live out a real-world everyday spirituality."

"Thank you for organising this workshop at a time when I think the church seems to be going around in circles. It was so refreshing to take a step back for a few hours and take the long-view."

Jim began the day by asking the participants to share what they hoped to get from the day; topics and matters of particular concern and relevance to their own experience. He then presented an insightful analysis of our desire for renewal in the church, and various ways we might consider where to invest our energy and attention; most specifically in reconnecting with those who have left the church and striving to encourage them to return, bringing themselves and their own experiences, gifts and particular ministries back into the church, which is poorer for their absence.

In the first session, Jim explored how we understand the presence of God and what our own personal experiences might mean in this context. His own personal experiences were especially valuable as we pondered these questions. One specific example is around this question of a 'conversion' experience (or a 'Damascus Road' experience). Jim challenged us to think not in terms of one single experience but a whole lifetime of conversion experiences; in this way our own hearts and spirituality is being constantly renewed and refreshed by God.

He followed this with a session on how we respond to God's grace and what is meant by 'Everyday Spirituality', drawing closely on the themes of his book. Throughout he took questions from the participants, which allowed for a developing dialogue with those present.

After lunch we returned to consider what role the church plays in spirituality and some analysis, with input from the audience, about how we feel the church is doing. We closed the day by discussing Christians as change agents in the church and the world, and then returning to those key themes we started the day with to apply what we had learned during the workshop to the topics we had identified in the morning.

Jim's book should be essential reading for anyone involved in church leadership, as well as those involved in Christian formation and teaching. His style is accessible and understandable. I highly recommend Jim as a speaker, workshop presenter and group discussion leader. I think one of his greatest strengths is in drawing out the experiences of people and helping to make sense of God's constant presence in our lives.

Christopher Waterhouse, Director, St James' Institute