

- 6 *Numbers 14 (see also 26)*  
Do you agree with the view that pessimism does more harm to a church community than atheism? How would *you* have responded to the spies' reports when they returned?
- 7 *Numbers 17*  
Aaron's budding staff. Is your church growing both quantitatively (in terms of numbers) and qualitatively (in terms of people developing in their relationship with God)? How do you know this?
- 8 *Numbers 21*  
The bronze snake Moses fashioned offered a remedy for snake-bite (vv.6-9). Jesus has offered us a remedy for sin – an escape route from the mortal danger we're in. But do we take it for granted?
- 9 *Numbers 22-24*  
These chapters focus on the Moabites, enemies of God's people with God's Spirit moving (eventually) in Balaam. It implies God is for *all* people – anyone can play a part. Thinking about your own church, do you truly believe this – that all have a part to play? How can you encourage this? In contrast, do you ever feel that God has passed you by?
- 10 *Numbers 27*  
Moses reaction to the 'legal' dilemma he is confronted with is to pause and pray, expecting God to speak in some clear way. Do *we* model this when faced with difficult dilemmas?

### **Closing**

*Be still for a while, quietly reflecting on the discussion you've had. End by saying together the priestly prayer (6:22-26): 'The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; the Lord turn his face towards us and give us peace.'*

# SACRED

## Group Resources

## Month 22

## Opening Prayer

O God the Father, source of all that is good and true,  
in whom is calmness, peace and harmony,  
heal the dissensions which divide people from each other,  
and bring us back to a unity of love,  
which may bear some likeness to your divine nature.  
And as you are above all things, make us one by unity of thought,  
that through the bonds of love we may be one,  
both with ourselves and with each other;  
through that peace of yours which makes all things peaceful,  
and through the grace, mercy and love of your Son, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

*(St. Dionysius, 6<sup>th</sup> Century)*

## General Question

- 1 This month we've returned again to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, to study *Numbers*. Have you found it an easy read? And has God spoken to you at all through it?

## Activity

In the early chapters of *Numbers* several people are mentioned by name. All are counted - a list of all their names would have been carefully compiled. Our name is an important aspect of our identity. It's more than just a collection of letters, it captures in the mind of the person using our name something of who we are, what we look like, what we do and say and think.

So, today, write each group member's name on a piece of paper. Fold up all the papers, place them in a bag, and invite everyone to select one (make sure no-one picks their own name!). Each person then silently prays for that person, thinking about their name, their character, their hopes and needs (in so far as they know them). After a few minutes, reflect on the exercise together.

## Further Ideas

*As usual, the intention is not to work through all these ideas, just to tackle some of them as the group chooses.*

- 1 *Numbers 3,4 (see also 18)*  
The priesthood (from the Levite clans) was God's gift to the people. Is it still? Do we need priests today? And do you think there should be an enforced retirement age for them?
- 2 *Numbers 6 (see also 30)*  
Chapter 6 describes the vows a Nazarite would make to be set apart, dedicated to the Lord.  
Can you think of applications of this principle for us today, Whether the vows are made permanently or for a season?
- 3 *Numbers 7*  
On giving. I once heard it suggested that an annual league table be published of each person (or family's) giving to the church that year, expressed in absolute terms and also as a percentage of income! Is it a good idea - after all, the various offerings described here were very public?  
Would it lead to an increase in people's generosity?  
Would it lead to pride? Or resentment?
- 4 *Numbers 8*  
The Levites were the 'moral watchdogs' of Israel.  
Who are the moral watchdogs in your life?  
Do you need them? Do you heed them?
- 5 *Numbers 11*  
"Is the Lord's arm too short?" (v.23).  
Think of a difficult situation you are currently facing.  
Do you believe that God can resolve it to produce a 'good' outcome, albeit one that's different to that you might be hoping for or expecting?