

Circuit Newsletter

Autumn 2022



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Dear All,

Welcome to this edition of the York Circuit Newsletter! As we begin a new church year some things will remain similar to previously, while others may look very different. This September sees various changes across the circuit – for some churches and for some of the ministers – so this is a good opportunity to let you know what is happening.

- New Earswick and Stillingfleet have changed their status and will now continue to meet in their local settings under the auspices of Central Methodist Church.
- Alne, Huby, Husthwaite, Stillington and Tholthorpe have become a single new church gathering together in different locations. They are now called Villages Together Methodist Church, with David Bidnell as their minister.
- West Thorpe is part of the Acomb, Holgate and Southlands part of the circuit, staffed by Andy Lindley, John Bailey and Louisa Taylor.
- John Schofield is now the minister at Bishopthorpe and Copmanthorpe.
- Elizabeth Cushion has taken over as minister at Hessay, Rufforth, Lidgett and Poppleton.
- Alyson Christy, with David Bidnell, will be working with Easingwold.

We look forward to the opportunities and challenges that this coming year will bring.

Best wishes

David

Listening for the Silence – Living the Drama

Dear Friends,

If you and your churches have been following the lectionary readings recently you will have noticed that we are in the midst of a series of parables from Luke's Gospel. Broadly speaking I would guess that we may have three particular tendencies, among others, when we read the parables, mirrored perhaps also in the way we read other narratives in both the New Testament and in the Hebrew Bible. Firstly, we may approach the story assuming it is trying to make a specific doctrinal or theological point that we are intended to grasp. Secondly, we may feel confident before we have even read the narrative that we know what it is about and the point it is intending to convey. Thirdly, we may work our way through the tale without pausing and paying too much attention to the commas and full stops.

What if the stories are far more than illustrations of points, or not designed to convey doctrines or beliefs at all? What if their meaning is not controlled by titles or by standard interpretations that they have been given over the years? What if they are living dramas

encouraging us to stop and ask questions of what is going on both for the characters and for their first-century listeners?

We could spend a considerable amount of time reflecting on all of these areas, but I want to focus for now on seeing Jesus' parables as dramas into which his initial hearers, and we as readers, are invited. Imagining the story unfolding on a stage can help us with this. When reading we perhaps only rarely pause at a full stop before moving on. When characters act out an episode they create moments of silence which draw us into more sensitive attentiveness to the questions and dilemmas with which they are preoccupied. It can often be the silences that help us to reflect on the emotions and the puzzles.

You might like to try this out in your own reading of the parables. Let me give a brief example from Luke 14:16-23, the tale of a rich man whose dinner invitation is outrageously snubbed and rejected by his fellow wealthy elite, but then accepted by those who are of a very different social status. I would suggest there are three key moments of silence. The first comes when the rich man first hears that he has been rejected. This is a critical moment. What does he do now? What are his options? How does he feel now that his strategy of ingratiating himself with other rich folk has seemingly failed? The second emerges for those who are subsequently invited. What do they do now? How do they make sense of this extraordinary turn of events? Can they trust this man? The third arrives at the very end of the story when the host is left questioning where he stands now. Has he burned his bridges with those of similar status to himself? Should he continue to relate more closely to those who cannot reciprocate his generosity? Is it worth having another go at inviting his elite contacts to another dinner?

You will find that you have other questions that the silences provoke for you. And, of course, you can always go one step further and ask yourself:

"If I were that rich man, what would I do?"

"If I were one of those guests who enjoyed the meal, what would I be wondering about?"

"If I were one of those who had been part of the coordinated effort to reject the host's initial invitation, what might change my attitude?"

To listen for the silence is to live the drama. To live the drama is to listen for the silence.

With my best wishes to you all.

David.

New Beginnings

From September 2022 there has been a new church in the York Circuit! Villages Together Methodist Church was officially inaugurated at its first service, and subsequent church council, on Sunday 4th in Huby.

For many years now the congregations in Alne, Huby, Husthwaite, Stillington and Tholthorpe have been meeting together for worship and fellowship. Attempts have been made to make these links more official by, for example, holding joint church councils, but these have never been made official, or been totally successful.

As our congregations were decreasing in number and becoming older and less able to fulfil roles once enjoyed, we realised that it was time to explore new horizons. Joining together with friends seemed to be a solution to consider.

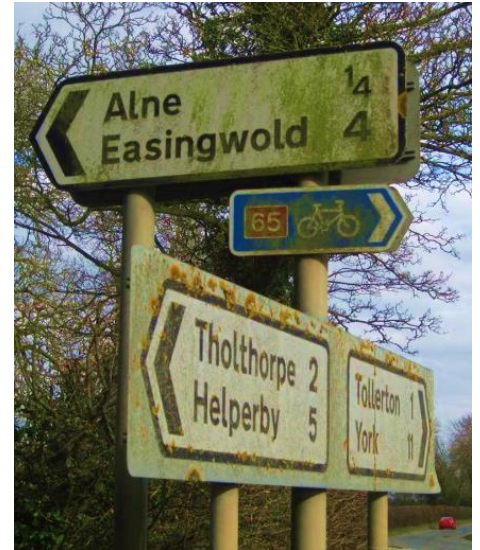
After much discussion, prayer and support from the circuit, we began to move towards becoming one new church with one combined membership.

This journey is far from over. We know that there will be challenges to overcome and that we will all need to be sympathetic to the needs of our members and their separate communities. We will need to communicate carefully, adapt our ways of working and pray!

However, we feel that we move forward from a position of enthusiasm and strength and not from a position of desperation or dismay. We look forward to making new links, working in new ways and finding energy for new projects.

We are sure that we will continue to be supported by the circuit and our 'new' minister David. Please do come out to join us sometime (but do look closely at your plan to see where we are meeting, as we are going to be moving round our different buildings in rotation). Finally, we would ask you to pray for the success of our new adventure.

Sally Gall and Villages Together Methodist Church



News from the Children, Youth & Families team

We do hope you have had a restful summer holiday – even those of you with little ones! We have a packed programme this autumn, with regularish activities such as One X and One Family running alongside a number of other events.

One X

Our first regular One X meeting will be at the hub on 23rd September from 5-7pm.

Future meetings are on:

- 7th October
- 21st October
- 4th November
- 2nd December

This group is open to anyone in school year 6 and up.

Other events this term include:

- **3Gen** 30th September – 2nd October. The team have planned and will be running the Town Hall venue at 3Gen this year. We have ten tickets, the costs is £120, of which the district will pay one third as well as organising and paying for transport. Please contact Victoria if you are interested.
- **Agents of Change Roadshow** 26th November at Pontefract. This is looking at climate justice through craftivism. We can take a minibus to this event, but would need to know numbers well in advance, so please get in touch with Victoria if you are interested. Accompanied younger children are welcome at this event.
- **Ice-skating** 17th December. We ask for a contribution of £5 per young person for this activity. Again we need to know numbers in advance to book tickets, so please get in touch if you are interested. Accompanied younger children are welcome.

One Family

In response to parent feedback, we have tinkered with the One Family format, meeting earlier and for a shorter time, so that younger siblings can get home before the witching hour. Our new time is 4.30-6pm, this will still include craft, games, food and time to learn about God, but we will not be offering a worship slot in the same way, instead this will be woven through the time we spend together.

Our dates are:

- 14th October
- 11th November
- 26th November – Agents of Change Roadshow – see above
- 17th December – ice-skating - see above

Volunteer support network

This group has been a casualty of the pandemic, so rather than hosting regular meetings, we will be offering one off workshops on areas that you have told us are of concern. The first of these will be *Building church, building relationships*, discussing the challenges of volunteer recruitment and the importance of relationships in building volunteer teams. 22nd November 6pm for food 7pm to start at Acomb Methodist church. Contact Amy to book

Save the date!

21st – 22nd January Sleepout for the homeless at Lidgett

3rd – 5th February Emmaus weekend in Wydale Scarborough, for over 14s (contact Victoria for more info)

11th March Celebration of Women in Ministry event in Hull

14th - 16th April Flourish District Weekend in Scarborough. The team are once more running the youth stream and this time will also be offering activities and events for young families and parents. Bookings are now open <https://www.yorkshirenemethodist.org/flourish23/>

20th May Youth Synod at Manor School

If you would like any further information or to chat with any of the team, please get in touch:

Amy amy.shephard@methodistyouth.org.uk 07708 559419

Heather heather.lewis@methodistyouth.org.uk

Lorraine lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk 07850 631168

Victoria victoria@methodistyouth.org.uk 07473 065856

Circuit Diary Dates

- **Circuit Council** Weds 14th Sept 2022, 7pm, Haxby and Wigginton Methodist Church
- **Coffee morning for supernumerary ministers and partners** Tuesday 1st November 2022, 10.30am-12, Strensall Methodist Church
- **Leaders of Worship and Preachers' meeting** Wednesday 30th November, 7pm, Haxby and Wigginton Methodist Church
- **Circuit Council** Tuesday 6th December 2022, 7pm Haxby and Wigginton

Eco Task Force Update September 2022

It's so encouraging to see momentum building in the Climate Movement in general and in our local Circuit in particular. There seems to be real energy around this, at a time when, let's face it, we are all pretty shattered! I've shared some stories about what's been happening. I would also like to encourage you to check out the proposed Circuit Environmental Policy on the website. This will be brought before the next Circuit Council to adopt, so all views are gratefully accepted. The Policy looks to go beyond thinking about Climate as a separate agenda item and an extra 'thing on our to do list'; considering our impact on the world around us should become something 'we just do', as naturally as breathing. The policy does also offer some practical ways to get started. <https://www.yorkmethodist.org.uk/about-us/eco-church-and-circuit.html> I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Lorraine Jones, Eco Task Force lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk

Eco Task Force visit to Poppleton July 2022

The group met at St Everilda's Church and before visiting the Churchyard we took a look at the amazing human sun dial on the Millennium Green. This is good example of the early use of solar energy as your body acts as the gnomon when you stand on the stone for the appropriate month and your shadow indicates the time on a stone dial with amazing accuracy.



There has been a Church on the site of St Everilda's since 1088, though it was rebuilt in the twelfth century. Lynda Salmon and Andrew Wordie explained how the Church yard has been tidied up and, sadly some of the trees felled as they were unsafe. We looked at the composting bins Andrew made enabling organic matter to be recycled and solar lights which come on as people walk up to the Church.

The Methodist Chapel was first built in 1817 and the new hall completed just this year, so there was ample opportunity to compare thermal properties of old and new. The solar panels, wood cladding and large window walls allow the best possible capture and retention of the sun's energy. They also enable use of an air heat source pump which runs from the electricity produced by solar panels. It works through an under floor heating system and is sufficient to keep the building warm all the year round. Chris Garvey from Green Building Renewables who installed the pump, pointed out that it was ideal for use in new, well insulated buildings, but that it would not be suitable for older, less heat efficient properties, for which there would be better ways to conserve energy, such as solar panel systems.

The new garden looks out over wild areas of field and woodland. It offers bat boxes and a hedgehog staircase as well as a wonderful area for users of the Church premises, particularly the under-fives group.

John Middleton, Poppleton Methodist Church

Huntington Methodist launch Eco church

I was invited along to Huntington Methodist Church to talk to their newly formed Eco Church Group to find out what they were up to and to explain the work of the Circuit Task Force to them. They are having their launch on Sunday 4th September in their Sunday Service. Can't wait to hear how they get on. If anyone would like to invite the task force to come along to their church to talk about the possibilities, one of us would be happy to visit. Just contact Lorraine.

Haxby Community Garden – Come and see the plans!

Sunday 25th September 2022 2-4pm

The Team at the newly formed **Whole Life Community Garden**, created in partnership with the NHS, are busy beavering away doing background work while awaiting the agreement to lease the land. It all needs to be done before a spade even gets near the garden, but it's important work. You can go along to chat to the team and see the plans at Haxby and Wigginton Methodist Church in September, at the start of York Environment Week.

There will also be a **talk by Carol Atkinson**, one of the trustees, who has worked for the Department of the Environment and for Cranfield University and who has written many papers on the subject of tackling climate change. Entitled **“So what can we actually do about Climate Change anyway?!”** she is going to talk us through some of the key issues. She will also help us to think about what actions we can take individually and collectively. It's at 4.30pm on the same day, same place!



RESOURCES

The group want to provide resources to help you get going on your Eco Church journey, or to help you make changes as a church or individuals at home. One of the 5 areas of Eco Church is 'Lifestyle'. Lorraine has created a presentation which you can view at home or share with your congregations, with some tips on getting started. Go to the Eco Church area of the Circuit Website to find it.

Book Recommendation: **Refugia Faith; Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders and the Healing of the Earth** by Debra Reinstra.

This book explores how our faith and theology shapes our view of the natural world. It challenges us to move beyond simply 'stewardship', which implies a separation from the natural world and means that we end up thinking about the natural world as just a bunch of

resources to use, albeit carefully. How can we, instead, focus on the healing and repair of the natural world and recognise that we are fundamentally a part of it. Through beautifully crafted words and stories, I realised it explained my own personal 'Eco theology'.

Lorraine Jones

PRAYER

Loving God, as Climate Change becomes ever more apparent and impactful, we pray for leaders of the world to feel the sense of urgency needed to take clear, lasting action. We pray for wisdom and determination. We pray for inspirational and creative solutions that will not only start to slow down climate change, but will also start the process of healing our natural world. We pray for solutions that have justice and fairness at their heart. Show us how we can be part of these solutions. Amen

Lay pastor reflections

It's been just over a year since I started working as a Local Lay Pastor in the York Circuit, and the image that springs to mind when I look back is that of a garden. Quite literally: being based primarily at Acomb has given me the privilege of spending quite a lot of time in the beautiful Quiet Garden – for meetings and conversations; helping to lead Quiet Days and times of prayer; and even doing a bit of weeding from time to time!

More broadly, the work of "Lay Pastor" feels a bit like that of a gardener. Sometimes it involves a regular cultivation of relationships: attending meetings, visiting those who are sick, being present to what's going on in people's lives (and sending countless emails). Sometimes it's more about planting seeds and seeing what new things are emerging in an "almost-post-pandemic" world – exploring how we might worship and walk together more "intergenerationally" as a church; how we might be more present to so many in our neighbourhood who are struggling with a sense of isolation and with the cost of living crisis; being part of the Circuit "Eco task force" and helping to form a more local Eco group through Churches Together. But I think a vital aspect of my work is to also have moments when I stop, in order to let go of what might be "dead wood", rejoice at what's been growing and give thanks. One of the greatest joys this year has been to witness various people discover a new sense of community and connection, with others and with God – some of whom have never had that experience before in their lives.

It's also when I stop that I remember that the true gardener is God, and that I'm just one member of a team – so thank you to everyone around the circuit who has supported me, welcomed me, and done some digging with me (literally and metaphorically) this past year. I look forward to continuing to get my hands dirty in the future!

Louisa Taylor

The hourglass: Bill Topping's journey

It's with great excitement that I embark on my journey as a diaconal candidate.

What a journey it promises to be. Alongside the general discernment process I am required to participate in a placement, complete a portfolio, attend an array of meetings, and have a resilience assessment. It's certainly thorough, but I am reassured by the deliberate design of this candidating year – shaped so as to give an individual (and the church) the best possible chance to make the right decision.

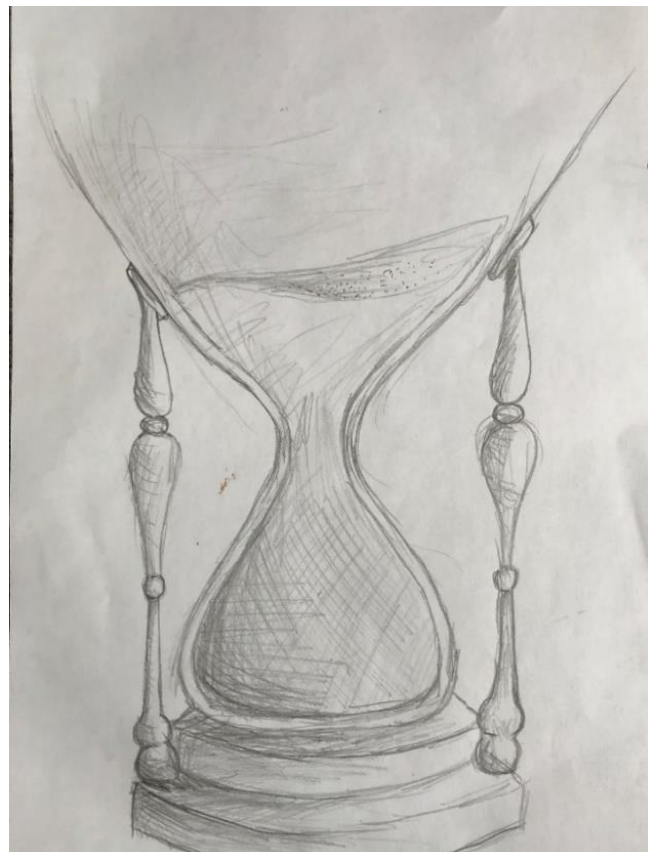
One thing is for sure, the York Circuit feels like the best possible environment out of which to candidate. The wisdom, support, enthusiasm and generosity of those helping me through this process is never-ending and I thank you all for your comforting presence as we journey together.

One element of my portfolio is to tell the story of my Christian journey. Below I share a shortened version of what I am submitting. I am so grateful to my friend Penny Page who drew the hourglass picture, an image that will be with me every step of the way.

My Christian story can be, pretty neatly, split into three sections which when put together resemble the shape of an hourglass. The first section is my childhood and my youth up until the age of 18. This period is represented by the lower bulb of the hourglass, wide and solid at the bottom which gradually becomes thinner. The second section, the shortest period, is represented by the thin neck in the middle. This covers my three years at university. The final section relates to my life since leaving university. This is the upper bulb, beginning thin and gradually widening. Of course this hourglass becomes top heavy but the firm foundation means while it may wobble here and there, it never fully tips. Importantly for this hourglass, this upper bulb does not have a top. It is left open, and therefore continues to widen as my experience grows. Unusually, with this hourglass, the sand fills from the bottom and continues to pile up as my journey progresses and the opening at the top widens. The sand represents my relationship with God.

The lower bulb

I am lucky enough to have experienced a loving and fun-filled childhood in which church played a huge role. The Methodist Church I went to while growing up was filled with young



folk my age and we are all still firm friends. The welcoming and generous atmosphere of my childhood church experience, alongside my family life, instilled me with principles and beliefs that have compassion, justice, peacefulness and community at the centre.

The hourglass neck

I then went to university where I lost touch with church. There was no deliberate decision, it was simply that the new experiences I was having meant other things became deprioritised and faith was one. After leaving university however, and reflecting back on my three years of study, I was able to identify that something was missing. It didn't take long for me to realise it was my relationship with God. That is to say the relationship I had with God. I now know, represented by the sand still flowing through, that God was always with me during that time, even if I didn't understand it.

The upper bulb

After leaving university I was able to re-connect with my faith and church life. This process made clear to me that from then on, not only would what I did with my life be connected to my faith, it would be actively informed by it. I then spent several years trying different things, exploring alternative ways of living, coming closer to God, and began the process of discerning a call to ordained ministry. In the years after leaving university I:

- Spent a year in London working in Methodist Church House for the Joint Public Issues team.
- Lived in a community house at Hinde Street Methodist Church
- Spent a year at Hilfield Friary with the Society of Saint Francis, an Anglican order of Franciscans
- Studied briefly at the Queen's foundation in Birmingham
- Worked for the chaplaincy team at the University of Roehampton

Then I came to York to work as the Outreach Worker for Lidgett and Poppleton Methodist Churches and chaplain at Forest of Galtres Primary School. The community emphasis, relationship focused, servant ministry I have been able to engage with since being in York has confirmed for me a sense of calling to the diaconate. I feel ready to explore making that all encompassing commitment to God and the words of the covenant prayer come to me as I prepare for this process – “I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.” Amen.

Bill Topping

Circuit prayer rota

4th Sept	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 4th Sept is West Thorpe. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Many churches use this time of year to pray for our planet and the need to take better care of it. Pray for the climate crisis and care for creation to be taken seriously by our leaders and for appropriate measures to be taken urgently.</p>
11th Sept	<p>This week we're praying for the new Villages Together Methodist church, where several existing village communities have decided to join in worship and mission together. Thank God and pray for the work of God in those communities.</p> <p>We also remember those who work in education and for students and pupils as they start a new academic year.</p>
18th Sept	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 18th September is Acaster Malbis. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Many churches celebrate Harvest at this time of year. What do you have to be grateful for over the last year?</p>
25th Sept	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 25th September is Acomb. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>As churches celebrate Harvest, many also give back to God in thanks for what they have received. What might you be able to give- time, money, skills?</p>
2nd Oct	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 2nd October is Bishopthorpe. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Next Sunday is Homeless Sunday. Pray for those who do not have a stable home and for those who work with them, particularly for Carecent and other agencies working in York.</p>
9th Oct	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 9th October is Central. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>This Sunday is Prisons Sunday. Pray for prisoners, their families, victims of crime and all those working in the criminal justice system. You can find suggestions at https://www.prisonweek.org/</p>
16th Oct	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 16th October is Clifton. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>This Sunday is Freedom Sunday, when we are encouraged to pray for people who have been trafficking or subjected to modern slavery. You can find out more at https://freedomundayglobal.org/</p>
23rd Oct	<p>The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 23rd October is Clifton Moor. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place.</p>

	One World Week is a time to remember we are One World and to focus on issues that affect people all around the world. Think of one or two issues and pray about them.
30th Oct	The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 30th October is Copmanthorpe. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place. Today is Bible Sunday. Pray for those who don't have access to the Bible in their own language, and for those who work on translation. Give thanks that we are free to study the Bible.
6th Nov	The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 6th November is Easingwold. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place. As we approach winter, many people this year will be struggling with the costs of heating and fuel, as will many churches and community groups. Pray about this and consider what your church might be able to do to help.
13th Nov	The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 13th November is Haxby & Wigginton. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place. Today is Remembrance Sunday. Pray for all those whose lives have been scarred by war.
20th Nov	The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 20th November is Heslington. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place. Statistics suggest around 1 in 3 women around the world experience violence, many from a partner. Pray for those seeking to change this and for the survivors and victims of domestic violence.
27th Nov	The church on the Circuit Prayer Rota for 27th November is Hessay. Thank God and pray for the work of God in that place. Today is Advent Sunday. Pray that over the coming weeks you will have time to stop and prepare for the coming of Christ.

Staff days off

Staff member	Day off	Staff member	Day off
David Bidnell	Friday	John Schofield	Friday
Elizabeth Cushion	Friday	Judith Stoddart	Saturday
Rory Dalgliesh	Friday	John Bailey	Monday
John Hayward	Monday	Alyson Christy	Monday
Andy Lindley	Monday	Bill Topping	Monday

Reflections

We've seen in this newsletter that there is a lot that is changing around the Circuit. This quarter's reflections invite us to consider how that can feel- and how the one thing which is always constant is God's love.

Called to go

Read: Genesis chapter 12 verses 1 to 9.

Think: God calls Abram and Sarai to leave their home and set off into the unknown. How would you feel if you had to do that? Has God ever called you to make a big change in your life? Maybe to change jobs, or move house, or move church? What was it like?



The reward for their obedience will be to found a great nation. God would be with them and their descendants, and eventually the whole world would be blessed as a result of Abram and Sarai's obedience. But that was all far in the future and all Abram and Sarai could do was trust. What are you trusting God for?

Pray: Give thanks that God's love is always with us, and pray that you will experience that steadfast love through all change.

Exile and hope

Read: Jeremiah chapter 29 verses 4 to 14

Think: The people of Jerusalem had been invaded, conquered and dragged into exile by the Babylonians. Cut off from their homeland and places of worship, it must have felt that God had abandoned them. Jeremiah writes to offer hope that this isn't the case. Whatever their past, the future is bright.



In the meantime, they are to settle down and be patient. Are there changes you are hoping for, a restoration of places or relationships? Does this passage encourage you? Are there things you could be doing to bring that change about?

Pray: Pray for those forced to leave their homes because of war and political upheaval, and especially for refugees in our own communities. Are there ways you could offer practical help?

Change of heart

Read: Acts chapter 9 verses 1 to 19

Think: The familiar story of Saul/ Paul's conversion describes a radical change of mind. More often we re-think and change our minds gradually over time. Over the years our churches have made changes to how they operate- for example, ordaining women as ministers alongside men. Change can cause a lot of heartache but can also be freeing and allow better conversations with our communities.

Have you found it hard to deal with change in your church? Are you able to see positives from past changes that might help as you consider future change?

Have you ever changed your mind about something important? What brought it about- new evidence or perspectives? Were there things which made it hard?

Pray: Pray for your church and yourself to be able to make good decisions about issues they face, for honest conversation and willingness to listen with love.



A new heaven and a new earth

Read: Revelation chapter 21 verses 1 to 5

Think: This passage comes at the end of the book of Revelation. While we think of it as a description of the end times, it was written to encourage the early churches to keep being faithful in the face of persecution and suffering. How can it encourage us today?

It's probably best not to get too caught up in every detail of Revelation! But this vision of a new heaven and new earth, where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain sounds pretty good.

How does this make you feel? What do you look forward to about this picture of our future?

Pray: Pray for our planet, for the challenges of climate change and resource shortage. Ask God what you can do to help others see glimpses of the new heaven and new earth today.

