

2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

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Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

READ: ROMANS 4:13-25

"Hoping against hope,
he believed..."

REFLECT:

As I write the sun is streaming in through my window, spotlighting dust particles suspended in the air, transfiguring them into tiny flakes and fibres of glitter. The weather is feeling a few shades warmer. In gardens and on grass verges at the roadside luminous clumps of snowdrops and pale purple crocuses bloom. With these signs of springtime appearing I feel hope rising.

This week the government have sketched a "roadmap" for relaxing our lockdown restrictions and although I don't altogether trust them, and although there is some fear about what the consequences may be, it is still...if not exactly an end in sight... a tentative, hopeful beginning.

The lectionary reading offered this week comes from Paul's letter to the Romans, and tells of Abraham's trust in the promises and grace of God. Verse 19 says, "He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb." Even in circumstances that seemed beyond hopeless, Abraham held onto God's promises. In those beautiful, stand-out words from verse 18, "Hoping against hope, he believed..."

Hope is an amazing thing: flexible, resilient, vital. As a chaplain I witness the role it plays for those living with cancer. Together we hope that the chemo works, that the scan will bring good news, that the surgery will be successful. And if disaster comes... if the news that arrives is bad... beyond the immediate grief, hope usually reappears, attaching itself to a new horizon. We hope there will be time enough to do that important thing. We hope they will get this pain under control. Hope can withstand even our mortality, as I see when people voice the courageous hope to be remembered well, to leave this or that gift or trace or legacy behind them.

One beautiful image for resilience is that of a tree with deep roots to anchor and nourish, a trunk that's flexible to move with, rather than against, the winds and storms that buffet, and branches that reach up and out, giving shelter and bearing fruit. As people of faith, children of Abraham, we're called to be rooted in God, held steady by God's steadfast love and faithfulness, nourished and sustained by God's promises, all of which enable us to move gracefully with the winds that assail us. May this be so.

PRAY:

- give thanks for signs of spring and the hope they bring, and the wondrous possibility of being able to begin to be together again.
- that hope will endure. Sustaining us in the wilderness. Withstanding whatever the future brings.

COLOUR:

Colouring for adults is a thing! It's a simple, creative activity that can help us find calm. That's why this week's reflection comes with a bonus gift: a set of four bookmarks to colour, with some lovely words of promise and peace from Scripture. Enjoy! :)



RESOURCES:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:

www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

SUPPORT:

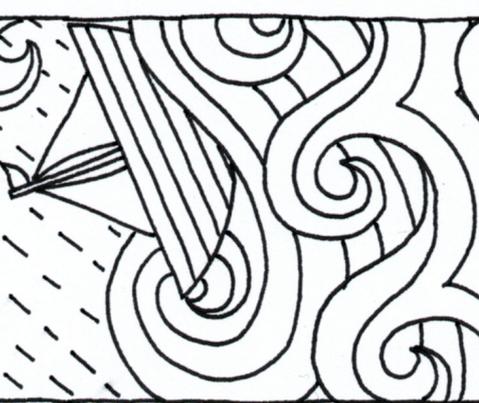
Pauline and myself, and your elders, are here for you if you need someone to talk to, have a prayer request, or just fancy a chat! Ping us an email or give us a ring.

I AM FEARFULLY MADE... MY
 FRAME WAS NOT HIDDEN
 FROM YOU... IN MY MOTHER'S
 WOMB AND WONDERFULLY MADE... MY
 LORD WHO FORMED MY INWARD PARTS:
 WHEN I WAS BORN: IT WAS NOT AS
 A MAN: I WAS KNIT TOGETHER
 IN SECRET, INTRICATELY
 WOVEN...
 PRAISE YOU, LORD FOR I AM FEARFULLY
 MADE...
 PSALM 139

... those who
 wait for the
LORD
 shall
 renew their
STRENGTH,
 they shall
 mount up
 with wings
 like
EAGLES
ISAIAH 40:31



PEACE!
BE STILL!
MARK 4:39



Peace
 I leave
 with you,
 my
Peace
 I give
 to you.
JOHN 14:27

