

Saying exactly what we think

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Exodus 32:1-14

The people of Israel are travelling from slavery in Egypt to freedom in their own land. At Mount Sinai they stop, and their leader Moses disappears up the mountain to meet with the God they cannot see. They become restless. Who knows when, or even whether, Moses will come back? So eventually they make themselves a new leader, a god made of gold, a god they can see and touch and believe in. The Lord is furious, and threatens to destroy the people and start the project all over again with the descendants of Moses. Moses' reply is perhaps one of the most extraordinary addresses to God in the whole of scripture. "Don't do that," he says to God. "Think what the Egyptians will say, they will think you had evil intentions all along. Think of your reputation! And what about your promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Are you going to break your promises now?" "And," we are told, "the Lord changed his mind."

Our prayers are usually considerably more polite than those of Moses. But perhaps even for us there is a place for saying exactly what we think, for raising objections about what God is allowing to happen in the world, and for making bold demands. God, it seems, is willing to listen. 🙏



God of surprising grace, give us the courage to be bold when we come before you. Help us to be honest in our prayers, and to know that you are ever willing to listen and to respond. Amen.

The Common Worship Lectionary

Part 2 – worship throughout the Church year

by Connor Hurley

The *Common Worship Lectionary* is built around the rhythm of the Church year, moving from Advent and Christmas through Lent and Easter, then into the long stretch of Ordinary Time. This shapes which passages are read and when, and the theme of the reading is often linked to the season. For instance, Epiphanytide readings often focus on revelation, such as Luke 4:14-22, which tells how Jesus hinted at his identity through reading scripture in the synagogue.

In a similar vein, the lectionary reserves readings about the cost of discipleship, such as Mark 8:34, for Lent. Jesus says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross." Ordinary Time opens space for longer narrative sequences, such as tracking Jesus' ministry through Mark or Matthew.

None of this is accidental, but is a way of allowing the whole biblical story to frame the year, offering repetition without monotony, structure without rigidity. 🙏

Finding God on the smallholding

By Jeni Parsons

Beekeeping is not about harvesting honey so much as making a home for wild creatures who may decide to continue to live in it until they change their minds and leave. To make a hive that bees will tolerate for a while means placing it well, with sun and shade, with food sources and water nearby. Wild bees nest often in hollow trees and a good hive mimics that. So I don't take much of their honey

stores since they make them to see them through winter and I don't therefore need to feed them sugar syrup very often as they have sufficient stores of their own. I try to respect their wildness – they will always be a source of wonder.

God and bees are wild, are wonderful and not "tamed", but I can make a shelter for God in my being and taste the sweetness of God's presence. 🙏

“Endeavour seven times a day to withdraw from business and company and lift up thy soul to God in private retirement.”

Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), Baptist pastor and missionary