

Hang on to faith

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Isaiah 45:1-7

The prophet speaks to a people in exile, defeated and far from home. All around them are people worshipping the gods of Babylon; gods who have seemingly proved stronger and more reliable than the Lord, the God of Israel. The Jews are far away from Jerusalem, and from the Temple where they once went to meet and worship their God. Why not settle down and adopt the local customs? No, says the prophet. They have to go home. And they have to hang on to faith in the only God who matters, the only God who is real. "I am the Lord, and there is no other," says God according to Isaiah. "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe."

There is only one God in the universe, the source of everything that is, everything that happens: both weal and woe, both good and bad. It is easy for us to credit God with the good things that happen. It is harder to keep faith in God when life is difficult and the world seems dark and cruel. It is easy to conclude that God is powerless in the face of evil forces rampant in the world. But Isaiah has the answer: God is the Lord, and there is no other. ☺

God of the universe, the only true God, we bow before you. Give us faith in difficult times, and trust when trusting is hard; that we may be your people and show forth your glory in the world. Amen.

Walking with Rosie

Getting lost

by Gillian Cooper

My sister is driving us to a new place to walk. The signs and the satnav are unhelpful, and soon we know we are lost. We turn round in the narrow lane and negotiate a ford for the second time. Eventually we find the car park, where the machine takes only coins, which we do not have. We set off on the walk in a thoroughly bad temper.

But the golden autumn sun shines through the trees, there

are leaves underfoot, a robin sings loudly above us, and there are places for the dogs to paddle in the river. Soon equanimity is restored, and we are in a mood to enjoy the warm welcome and excellent coffee at the café.

Sometimes we feel lost and hopeless. But there are always moments to look for, glimpses of golden light and sounds of clear water, to remind us that God is still with us. ☺

The Common Worship
Lectionary

Part 3 – the three-year cycle

by Connor Hurley

The *Common Worship Lectionary* (CWL) follows a three-year cycle – A, B and C. We are currently drawing towards to the end of Year A, so Year B will begin on 29 November, the First Sunday of Advent. Each year features at its heart one of the synoptic Gospels: Matthew in Year A, Mark in Year B, Luke in Year C. John appears at key points, especially during Lent and Easter. This rotation means that preachers are diverted away from focusing only on favourite

passages, as well as nudging churchgoers to look at the bigger picture of scripture.

The choice of Old Testament reading often echoes the Gospel theme, though the CWL includes alternative "Tracks". Track 1, known as "continuous", follows the narrative of Israel, while Track 2, or "related" readings, are chosen to connect thematically with the Gospel.

In choosing these readings the lectionary compilers were surely influenced by Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." ☺

“The mission of the Church is to live the ordinary life of human beings in that extraordinary awareness of the other.”

John V. Taylor (1914-2001), Anglican bishop