



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Isaiah 53: 4-7, 11 'One who bears our sins'

⁴ Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

¹¹ Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Sometimes an event happens when you least expect it. It might be a gift given, or a surprising conversation with another. I remember when I became a member of the church in Worthing forty years ago. I had been brought up in a Christian family but like many youngsters, although I went to church, I did not really know why. I was unsure until the Sunday morning whether I could give my life to Christ. Not until I stood with the others did I feel 'yes', God was calling and he helped me to respond. I also remember a conversation I had with a homeless man and I felt that we encouraged each other in our lives.



In Acts 8, Philip has a surprising encounter on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. An Ethiopian eunuch is on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and reads a part of the passage above, where Isaiah foresees the suffering of a lonely figure, bearing the whole burden of sin. Philip was led by the Spirit to ask him what he was reading, and proceeded to tell him of the good news, explaining what the prophet saw, that God raised Christ. When they arrived at some water the Ethiopian asked to be baptised there and then. Similarly, in Acts 9 when Paul has his Damascus road conversion, he went from being a persecutor to serving Christ.

These examples in Acts show us how God is at work changing people, and often in moments least expected. In all our lives God leads us if we just trust him. It reminds me of the hymn:

*This, this is the God we adore, our faithful, unchangeable friend,
whose love is as great as his power, and neither knows measure nor end:*

*'Tis Jesus, the first and the last, whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
we'll praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come.*

Joseph Hart (1712-1767)

Prayer: I invite you to read Psalm 23 prayerfully:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides still waters; he restored my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me. You prepare a place for me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.