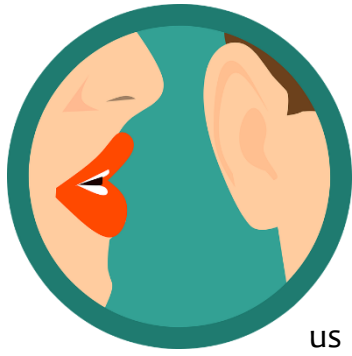




Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.



Hebrews 1:1-2 'God Speaking Through the Son'

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

A lively four-year old friend of mine said to me one day, "They told us at Sunday School that we can talk to God and that he talks to us". That sounded promising, I thought, until she continued, "When I say something to him, why can I never hear him answer? It's very rude not to answer when someone speaks to you." I tried to explain that God speaks to us in lots of different ways, and it's often not our ears that pick up his voice. Annabelle tossed her lovely red hair and persisted, "Well, it would be much easier if he spoke loud enough for me to hear!" I'd be surprised if we hadn't all thought that at some time in our lives.

Right at the beginning of the Bible, in the Creation story, God "speaks" creation into being, "Let there be light"; and, in the beautiful Prologue to John's Gospel, Jesus is called "The Word". It's fundamental to our Christian faith that God does 'speak' to us. So what are the ways in which he does this? The way my little friend would have liked – by direct speech that we can hear – we probably experience least often. I've only once actually heard a voice – I was alone in my car, praying as I drove, and the voice sounded so real and ordinary that I turned round to see who had spoken.

The most obvious way God speaks to us is through the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, which it's why it's good to follow a regular pattern of Bible reading. If this can be daily, with the aid of a commentary, even better. We can also belong to a Home Study Group and learn from each other's insights; and of course when we listen to the preacher at services of worship, we can hear God's voice.

As the opening words of the letter to the Hebrews tell us, the most important way that God speaks to us as Christians is through Jesus, his Son. It's through the Bible stories that we first learn about Jesus, and to begin with it's through those stories that God speaks to us. Then later, as we get to know Jesus as a person in our lives, we experience God's voice speaking to us more directly through him.

If we leave quiet space to listen in our prayer time, God may speak to us then. The Holy Spirit may prompt us from within, sometimes we might not recognize it as God's voice, we might call it conscience but it's often so much more. Importantly, God speaks to us on occasion through other people. Never forget, it could be you that God speaks through, to friend or stranger.

One profound way I've heard God's word over the years, is by reading 'spiritual' books. I use the word 'spiritual' with distinct reservation, but you probably know what I mean. It could be poetry, and even ordinary novels have their spiritual moments, through which God speaks to us.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to hear your voice, not just through our ears but through all our senses and in our hearts.

May we learn to listen, so that your word reaches us through everything that happens to us each day. Teach us, we pray, to recognize your voice in the words that others say to us, whether that word is written or spoken.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.