

## HOPE

*You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.*

### Isaiah 40.27-31 (NIV)

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel,

“My way is hidden from the Lord;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary

and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

1. How does this passage give you hope?
2. How might we nurture hope in ourselves?
3. How is your Church a source of hope?

## GROWING

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### 1 Corinthians 3. 1-9 (NRSV)

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human?

<sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. <sup>9</sup> For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.

1. Where are the signs for you personally that God is growing his kingdom?
2. How might we join in with him in this growth?
3. What do you think might be similar factions in the Church today, both local and national, that are signs of our spiritual infancy and which hinder our growth?

## CHURCH

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### 1 Peter 2. 4-10 (NRSV)

<sup>4</sup>Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup>like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in scripture:

'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

<sup>7</sup>To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner' <sup>8</sup>and 'A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall.'

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1. In two places in this passage Peter describes the Church as being a priestly people, i.e. the whole people of God. What might it look like for us to operate and be known as a royal priesthood?
  - In our worship?
  - In our daily lives?
2. Building a temple with 'living stones' sounds like a tricky business, more difficult than working with uniform bricks. What might be some of the challenges and joys of building with 'living stones'?  
What might be some of the ways these stones hold together?

## BRINGING

*You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.*

### Mark 2.1-12 (NRSV)

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup>So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup>Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup>And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' <sup>6</sup>Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'... Jesus said, <sup>10</sup>'But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'— Jesus said to the paralytic— <sup>11</sup>'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' <sup>12</sup>And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'

1. Who brings church, hope or growth?
2. What stops you being brought to Jesus?
3. What obstacles lie in the way of bringing people to Jesus?