

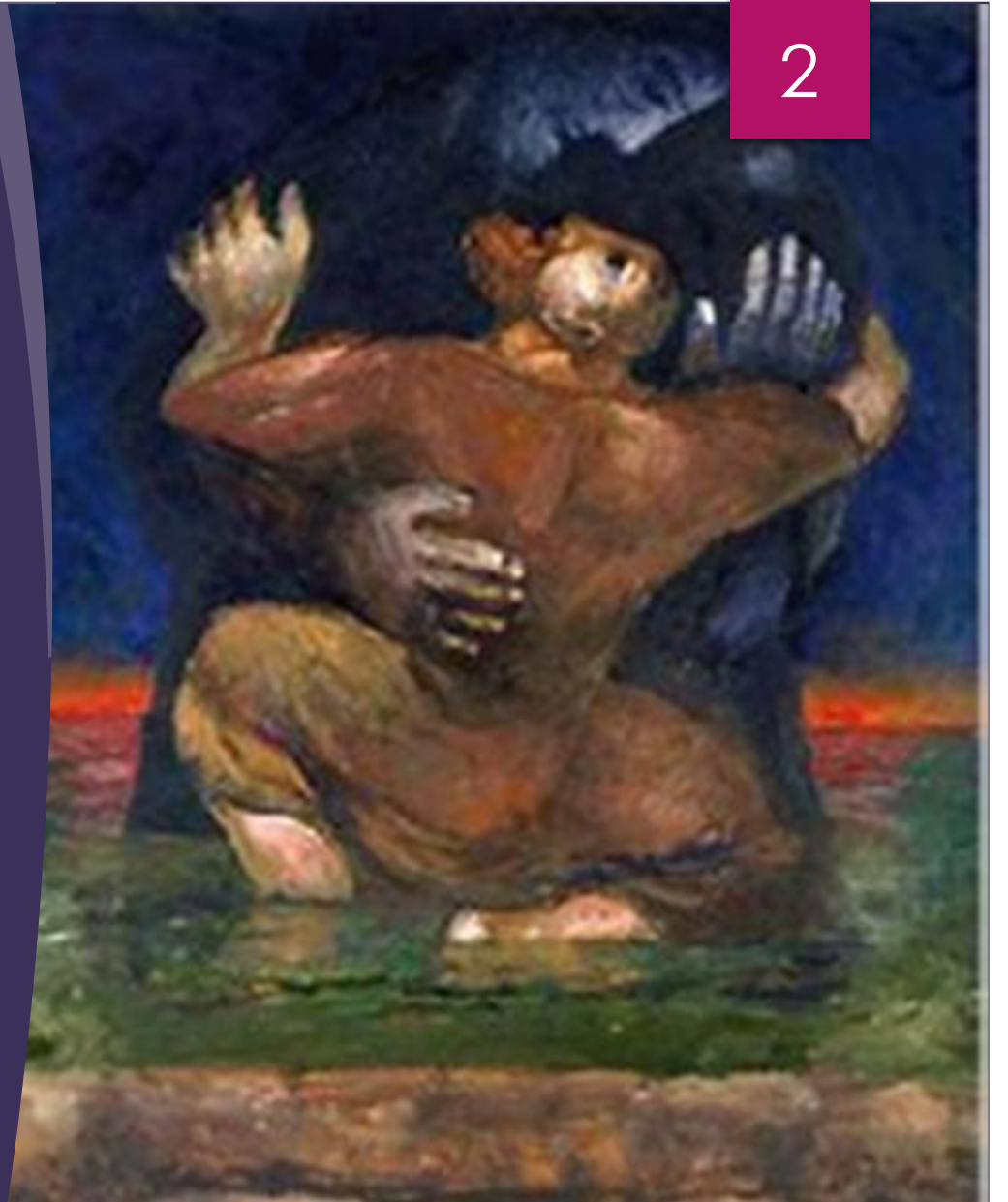


Living out our vocation in mission and ministry

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Post-covid?

- ▶ Questions, questions and more questions
- ▶ A question of wrestling and discernment, rather than straightforward answers
- ▶ Looking at the world's Long Covid syndrome



Isaiah 35

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom;

Like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.'



Isaiah 35

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Isaiah 35

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.



The 'new normal'

- ▶ Was the old normal really 'normal' anyway?
- ▶ How do we make our contribution as people of the word and the world, through our ministry and mission as a church, to ensure that the old normal does not become re-normalised in the post-Covid world?
- ▶ How do we tell stories alongside telling the Story?

Reality

- ▶ The task of facing reality is crucial if we want to move into hope, and do mission and ministry in a way that addresses the lives of those around us.
- ▶ Telling the Covid story: what might we be leaving out in the stories we tell? What do we shy away from? What and who remains invisible in our stories?
- ▶ How might we need to change the story?



Reality

- ▶ *Covid has brought us face-to-face with our human fragility and vulnerability*
How do we allow this story to speak into the fear of vulnerability and mortality around us? How do we allow this story to guide where we put our efforts in engaging with our communities?
- ▶ *Covid has reminded us of the importance of bodies*
What does it mean to proclaim Good News for our bodies?
- ▶ *Covid has highlighted previously invisible exclusions*
How do we attend to the patterns of visibility and invisibility of our communities?

Reality

- ▶ ‘Truth without love is unbearable’ (The Two Popes)
- ▶ Practicing confession in answer to truth
- ▶ Reality and truth are also the Good News of God’s love and transformation story
- ▶ To truly tell the story we need to develop habits of discernment, habits that nurture our ability to see where God is at work, to attend to the invisible, and draw the attention of those around us to where God is at work

Grief

- ▶ Lament as an essential practice in response to trauma
- ▶ Lament names reality, offers words to articulate it, legitimises the expression of pain and doubts about the presence and activity of God, and brings people together
- ▶ Lament is a practice that enables us to connect with the deep vulnerability and concerns of the world around us, the place we share a story, and we can invite others to see that story differently
- ▶ Lament protests, and longs for change
- ▶ Lament affirms simultaneously God's goodness and the horror of reality, without collapsing one into the other

Hope

- ▶ Hope is not optimism. Hope is rooted in God's promise to be with us, and this promise shapes how we share hope with others
- ▶ Hope is related to desire: what do we desire, and how does this shape our expression of Christian hope? How has the pandemic reshaped our imaginations and our desires?
- ▶ Hope is poised between memory and promise
- ▶ Hope is about action

Back to Isaiah 35

- ▶ Hope blossoms **in the desert**
- ▶ The promise of hope is made, not to the strong, but to the vulnerable
- ▶ No-one, not even fools...

