



Pathways

The magazine for the people of the Diocese of Oxford | Autumn 2022 | **FREE**

A people of hope

Together with God in tough times

PLUS: The cost of living crisis | Work, rest and play | Table or cheek?



Photo: Emma Thompson

It's been good to spend a day in almost every deanery in the diocese over the last year between November and July. I've seen at first hand the outstanding work of our clergy, chaplains, parishes and schools in care for their communities, in education, in maintaining and rebuilding the rhythms of worship and pastoral care.

I learned a lot about the effects of Covid and the slow journey of recovery we are making. We are only part-way there – the gentle regathering and resetting of the last 12 months will continue for another year at least. Energy is returning, but slowly. I caught a deep longing to rebuild ministry to children and young people and heard encouraging stories about new all-age congregations. I was inspired by many stories of lay discipleship and leadership in urban and rural areas.

The war in Ukraine and the growing energy crisis had an impact on communities and churches through the year. Many will find the coming year demanding financially and spiritually. Many will be anxious about climate and extreme weather and

what the future holds. You will find resources for all of these challenges in this edition of *Pathways*.

As I've reflected on my journey and the year ahead I've also been reading again the Acts of the Apostles, which tells the story of the early church and sets a pattern for our life. The first Christians faced many challenges, as do we. Yet through everything they set themselves to proclaim God's love and power revealed in Jesus Christ.

In the coming year we will need that same love, that same focus on Jesus, the same dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit as we "tell the people the whole message about this life" (Acts 5:20) and as we never cease "to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah" (5:42).

Steven Oxford

Bishop Steven
oxford.anglican.org/bishop-of-oxford

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We hope you enjoy reading *Pathways*. Email or write and let us know what you think. Contributor enquiries are welcome.

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Refugees welcome

We're working with Citizens UK as one of 20 strategic partners working together to resettle Ukrainian refugees. Over 200 Ukrainians have now been matched through our scheme and are settling into over 80 homes across the diocese.

oxford.anglican.org/refugees

For regular news and updates, visit the website: oxford.anglican.org/news



Maria Skoyles



Combating fast fashion and poverty

The Dorcas Dress Project, based in Oxfordshire, runs training and discipleship programmes providing skilled seamstress training and empowerment to help people into employment. The project produces dresses that help tackle negative fast-fashion practices such as increasing carbon emissions, waste, and the poor treatment of garment factory workers.

oxford.anglican.org/environmental-action



Alison Corbould

Out on the water

With an increasing number of local people in need and the heightening cost of living crisis, Broughton Church set out to offer day trips on their narrowboat to give respite to low-income families. A grant from the Development Fund supports the maintenance of the boat, enabling the trips to be provided free of charge.

oxford.anglican.org/development-fund



Madeline Hayden

Feeding the city

ReadiFood has been providing an emergency food parcel service for over 25 years to the people of Reading. Since the pandemic, more than 200 households in desperate need receive essential food, toiletries and household supplies each week through the Faith Christian Group.

oxford.anglican.org/poverty-and-inequality

We're on social media too. Search "Diocese of Oxford" on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

*“He’s always there
and I don’t need to
chase him.”*



Chris Wood

After 25 years of alcohol addiction, Chris met Jesus when he least expected it during a rehabilitation programme and has never looked back.

Despite growing up with everything he could ever need, Chris's lack of guidance and support from his mostly absent parents led him to feel that he didn't belong in his family.

"I had a privileged upbringing, went to public school and spent much of my childhood on the tennis courts with my siblings. But by the age of 13, I was already drinking half a litre of gin in the morning."

Chris spent the next 25 years addicted to alcohol before finding himself at rock bottom walking the streets of the city of Newcastle searching for used cigarette butts. He moved to Yeldall Manor, a Christian-run organisation in Reading providing residential rehabilitation to free men from drug and alcohol addiction. Here his journey to recovery and faith began.

"When I joined the Yeldall programme, I thought I knew it all already. But after talking to staff and others on the programme, I began to realise that I didn't know anything and that there was something missing inside of me, something I had been searching for, and had been trying to fill that hole with my addiction. That something was Jesus. I physically met Jesus when I started going to church halfway through the programme. All the guilt, shame and misery were immediately lifted from me in that wonderful moment."

The lifesaving impact of the time at Yeldall on Chris and his journey to faith enabled him to rebuild his life and his relationships with his family. Chris now works at Yeldall Manor helping other men who are where he once was, stuck in the cycle of addiction.

"God gives me the words and confidence in myself to speak to people in difficult and tragic situations. Without him I couldn't do what I do now, being honest, open and vulnerable. I know what that feels like to be where they are, so treating people with total respect and dignity who have often never received it and helping them to feel loved and to reconnect with their families is such a privilege."

"I'm still on that journey of faith and I struggle sometimes, just like everyone. I'm not very good at praying and I'm bad at making time to read the Bible, but I see God at work in my life every single day. I see him perform miracles and transform the lives of the people I work with every day. He's always there and I don't need to chase him. I feel and know that I am loved by God. I find that life is fun now!" 🙏

Words: Maddy Hayden

Photo: Steven Buckley



If you also find prayer and reading the Bible a challenge at times, find inspirational resources here:

oxford.anglican.org/prayer-and-scripture



Stop

Rest

Delight

Worship

Work, rest and play

Lots of chocolate was sold with a TV advert promising that it would help us to work, rest and play. Were Mars onto something when they promoted those three things together?

Is this what we need in order to flourish? In the last couple of years, work has become more changeable and, in many cases, much more demanding. For key workers there has been so much risk and exhaustion. For those who have exchanged the office for the kitchen table, it has at times been confusing. Are we now working from home or living at work?

The press here and in the States has used the word *languishing* to describe our current state. In psychology, that's a sort of opposite of flourishing. It's not a crisis but a feeling of flatness and disconnection. *The New York Times* referred to it as a state of "Meh!" I was reminded of some lyrics from a song by Sunrise Avenue:

"It's like we're stressing out
To find some peace of mind.
It's the story of our time".

Might we find recovery and reconnection when rest takes up its rightful place alongside work? This is what sabbath is all about. It's a theme throughout the Bible, from the first chapters where God rested from the work of creation on the seventh day. It's a reminder that we are human beings not just human doings!

Could sabbath have something profound to offer as hope and gift? It's a subversive practice in a culture that champions relentless productivity. It's a period of rest – and play. The Bible talks of finding joy in the Lord.

What a great principle, setting aside time to rest, and to delight in enjoyment. A time separate and bounded from work. While the sabbath is

usually 24 hours long in the Bible (a day, or sunset to sunset), it is at times longer. The principle is more important than the length of time.

If a full sabbath might feel or be overwhelming or un-doable, in our minds or in the reality of life's pressures, could we begin to step into sabbath practices, intentionally making space for rest and play?

The app *Couch to 5K* has been hugely successful in helping people build up to their first 5K run. Maybe we should plan a *5K to Couch*? What might that look like? What simple sabbath practices might we embrace to rejuvenate us as God's beloved human beings? A walk through nature with the phone left firmly behind? Delighting in something creative that we love but no longer make time for? A daytime nap? Gathering a few friends or family to just be or play?

John Mark Comer, author of *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, suggests that sabbath has four modes to it: Stop – Rest – Delight (curating joy) – Worship (practising gratitude and love). What might you build in the spaces where you can begin to use this ancient gift? 🦋

Words: Ian Macdonald, *Discipleship Enabler*
Lyrics to "Heartbreak Century" by Samu Haber, Victor Thell, Maria Jane Smith.
Photo: Shutterstock



What do you find rejuvenating? What reminds you that you are loved by God?

Coping with uncertainty

T. S. Eliot famously wrote that humankind cannot bear very much reality. Uncertainty is one aspect of the reality we have to cope with. How does the Bible help us with that?

We are now well into the third year of the pandemic and are also faced with a European war, not to mention the urgent need to address global warming. The state of our world makes our capacity to bear uncertainty even more of a challenge. I wonder how we can address this and avoid the twin hazards of a tendency to catastrophise and a temptation to deny the reality of what we face?

One of the most helpful passages in the Old Testament is chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, which highlights the need to discern what reaction is required at any particular time. It begins: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die," and continues to name various contrasting possibilities.

We have choices to make. We need the wisdom to discern the balance between action and contemplation. There is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (verse 7b). When Archbishop Justin used his Easter sermon to speak out about the government's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, he must have discerned that it was time to speak out, however unpopular that might make him in certain quarters.

There are examples of discernment in Jesus' life. We believe he was fully human and fully divine:

"Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as

something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." (Philippians 2:6-7)

Being fully human, Jesus experienced uncertainty. When he was a baby, his parents had to change their plans in order to flee from the cruel intentions of Herod. As an adult he was persecuted, even to death on the cross. From time to time, having battled with his own uncertainty about what was to happen, Jesus tried to prepare his disciples for what lay ahead. He spoke of his death and resurrection. Of course, they could not grasp this, as it went beyond their experience, although those special transfiguration experiences when God spoke to and about Jesus in the presence of witnesses challenged their assumptions.

Anticipating the future in which the disciples could expect to be persecuted, Jesus said that they would be given the words which they needed. "Do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time" (Matthew 10:19).

Not knowing is hard, but we are challenged to stand firm in our faith, trusting that God knows our concerns and is alongside our dilemmas. Ultimately, we must discern when to pray and when to act. Living with uncertainty is part of being a faithful disciple of Jesus. ¶

Words: The Revd Dr Anne Holmes, psychotherapist and Associate Priest at St Giles, Oxford.



Refugees have the stress of uncertainty to cope with, as well as the stresses of everyday life. The war in Ukraine has also brought home to us how uncertain the future can be.

Table or cheek?



Irim Sarwar is an American of IndoPak ancestry who was born Muslim and became Catholic via teaching at a Modern Orthodox Jewish school. She is a churchwarden at St Michael and All Angels, Summertown.

“Not another weepy heroine,” I sighed as we watched another Pakistani drama.

My father laughed. “They’re all like that, not written like they used to be.”

Typical father/daughter exchange, right? What if I told you that it came after I moved out and fourteen years of no contact?

We think of overturning tables as collective action, such as protests, but it begins with the individual.

Overturning tables is not throwing toys out of the pram or loss of control. Nor is it refusing to engage politically because we can’t get everything we want.

Overturning tables is speaking truth to power. It is drawing a boundary. It is calling attention to injustice.

We dismiss overturning tables as a flash of temper because we value comfort over establishing justice. As a society, we value niceness and

“Overturning tables is speaking truth to power.”

being agreeable, which is not the same as kindness. Why? In large part because the groups in power are held together by tenuous ties that would splinter under the stress

of conflict. Yet that conflict is the creative crucible of healthy relationships. Sadly, that mindset — unlike money — has trickled down.

We idolise niceness as “being charitable”

or “keeping the peace” when it is neither. We demonise conflict as failure when it is a natural part of relating, and rarely learn to engage in it constructively.

Overturning the table says “Enough.” No more abuse. No more injustice. No more desaparecidos. No more apartheid. No more murders of black men by those meant to protect and serve. No more.

In the moment afterwards, the question “How do we make this path straight?” emerges from the silence. In answering that question, we make room for God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

Irim’s article continues on page 14

In each edition of *Pathways*, we ask two Christians with different perspectives to explore a topical issue. Protests can make Christians uncomfortable. Jesus told us to turn the other cheek when confronted with an evildoer. He wasn't so passive when he confronted the money-changers in the temple – he overturned tables in protest. So, when is it right to turn our cheek, and when should we turn the tables?

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Matthew 5:38–39, part of the Sermon on the Mount).

Turning the other cheek was one of a series of exhortations by Jesus about the way we should live.

These radical teachings can be seen as counter-cultural, even subversive, because they proposed something radically different from Hebrew Law and the Roman *lex talionis* (law of retaliation).

Throughout history those words have inspired millions of women and men, lay and ordained, to restrain from responding to injury with violence. The teaching has been interpreted in contrasting ways, from meek acceptance to defiant resistance.

The case for turning the other cheek rests with the people who make

a stand against violence. Their testimonies and sacrifices – in some cases with costly consequences – are the most compelling and powerful arguments for non-violent action.

"... we are in solidarity with those who have no choice."

eight members of clergy who have taken an oath to take up arms to defend St Theodosius Monastery in central Kyiv. Their actions will carry personal consequences: for each life they take they will be barred from church ceremonies for three years. They are not the first or last Christians facing the dilemma to choose to turn the other cheek, or not.

Poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal and Fr Camilo Torres also wrestled with this question, in their case the "preferential option for the poor", leading them to take up arms and join the revolutionary movements



The Revd Ernesto Lozada-Uzuriaga is an artist-priest serving as incumbent in the Church of Christ the Cornerstone, Milton Keynes. His experience as a Latino in the UK shaped a ministry that has also been enriched by the contemplative tradition and liberation theology.

Ernesto's article continues overleaf

[Irim...]

An overturned table looks like Gandhi's civil disobedience, Black Lives Matter protests, workers' strikes, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Pope Francis' encyclicals, Archbishop Welby's Easter sermon.

An overturned table isn't just for us: it and the hard work that follows offer a person, institution, society the chance to stop sinning in a way turning the other cheek may not. Liberation is for the oppressor as well as the oppressed — how free are you when your hands grasp power and your feet keep others down?

As with anything in our world, an overturned table is not a panacea, and a happy ending is not guaranteed. Oscar Romero and so many others spoke truth to power, dying before they saw change, but that is not failure. Their vocation and ours is to begin to make straight God's paths, though we will not see the end of the work.

But, occasionally, God gives us a taste of how the finished work might look, and it is beautiful indeed:

"Dad, did you mean to ring, or did you just roll over on your phone?"

"Rolled over. Love you."

"Love you too."

Don't keep false peace; work to bring real peace — God's peace. Flip that table. ¶

[Ernesto...]

of Nicaragua and Colombia. They thought, maybe naively, that the revolution would deliver a just society close to their Christian values. However, time has shown that this was not the case.

For many people reading this article, and me, turning the other cheek is a matter of choice. It may be a hard choice but it's a choice we can make. For many people at the bottom of the social pyramid it isn't a choice but the cruel reality of everyday life. In following the teaching of turning the other cheek we trust that Jesus was right, and we are in solidarity with those who have no choice.

We don't need to sit and wait for somebody to slap us (in the literal or metaphoric sense), we should be proactive and see turning the other cheek as the opportunity to use our imagination and make a peaceful stand for the values of God's kingdom.

The African-American artist Faith Ringgold, together with other activists, placed eggs at the Whitney Museum in protest against the curators who did not include the work of black artists in their exhibitions. The pro-democracy protestors in Myanmar held an Easter Egg Strike, painting eggs with slogans in response to the military takeover. ¶

Further reading

Whether we choose to turn the tables or turn the other cheek, seeking God's guidance is an important first step. There are many stories of people in the Bible choosing to turn the tables and challenge the status quo; here are just a few examples: [daily-bible-study-tips.com/Heroes/Courage-to-Challenge-the-Status-Quo.htm](https://www.daily-bible-study-tips.com/Heroes/Courage-to-Challenge-the-Status-Quo.htm)

Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice considers how God calls us to seek justice, to test everything and hold fast to what is good, and explores the example of Jesus in teaching us about justice.

Rally: Communal Prayers for Lovers of Jesus and Justice offers encouraging and challenging prayers for those searching for the words to respond to injustice in a nonconfrontational way and take positive steps towards change with their faith community.

Christ-centred Conflict Resolution: A Guide for turbulent times explores practical steps to making peace, resolve conflict and overcome evil with good in our relationships with others from housemates to children to marriage partners, all with the understanding of Christ as the ultimate peacemaker.

Don't look away

Global warming, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, disease, poverty and war... the headlines of today. We've failed to exercise our God-given mandate to care for God's creation. Responding quickly and well is the greatest challenge of our age.

A stark picture

Eco-system collapse and climate change are a real and present threat to our continuation as a species. In the last half century about 50% of the world's animals have been lost. Of all the mammals left on earth, only 4% are wild mammals, 36% are humans, and a whopping 60% are now livestock. 70% of the bird biomass on the planet is made up of poultry. Insects have declined by 75% yet three-quarters of the crop types we grow rely on insect pollination.

The unprecedented heat and water shortages we all experienced in the summer are not unrelated events. They are part of a developing pattern of extreme climate events which are becoming the norm. What we've experienced comes with only just over 1°C of global warming, yet the world is currently on track for 4°C by 2100.

By and large we all managed for the few days of extreme heat. But for our brothers and sisters across the world, global warming and water scarcity is a present and often life-threatening reality. There is an issue of justice at play that lies at the heart of how we respond to these crises. It's the most prosperous parts of the world that are chiefly responsible for the degradation of our planetary ecosystem.

Our uncontrolled consumption and the consequent greenhouse gas emissions drive planetary warming, whereas those countries that have not developed their economies using vast quantities of fossil fuels are the worst affected. They're least able to mitigate the effects of global warming and adapt. People are losing their lives and livelihoods at an alarming rate.

We owe it to God

The numbers present a stark picture of the effect that we're having on the web of life. This matters, because the whole of creation matters. It matters because the Bible paints a picture of a God who is very, very keen on justice. It matters because it's the web of life that sustains us and provides for our needs.

So many times we read in the Bible of God's concern for the poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable, the stranger and the refugee. So many times we hear of the cause of the wronged being righted; the hungry being fed; those who wield power needing to have special care for the weak.

The environment and the climate are issues that link directly to our Christian faith. We have disrupted the ecological balance of all that God created on earth. We owe it to God, and to each other and to all the species we share the planet with, to restore the balance. As people of faith we have a responsibility to raise our voices for those who cannot. And we have a responsibility for our own actions and the example we set.

Gus Speth, a senior academic scientist, recently said science won't address these issues: "the top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that."

But we people of faith do know how to do that. This is the greatest physical and spiritual challenge humanity has ever faced and we have the tools and the understanding to go right to the heart of it.

Continues overleaf...

We can do this

All this has to change. Not just because it is self-evidently in our self-interest. But because it is our calling, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to live lives which are holy; to confess our sins of greed, apathy, indifference and selfishness; to change our ways; to uphold and work for justice for those who are suffering; to make amends.

Love the Lord your God... Love your neighbour... Be good stewards of the earth and all that is in it. These are words that lie at the heart of our faith, yet we have known about this looming crisis for decades, and for decades we have continued to assume that it is someone else's problem.

The world can still limit global warming to around 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Even this will have devastating consequences for many. But it requires radical action and better political leadership now, to avert the unimaginable chaos that would follow a temperature rise beyond this threshold.

We need to demand more of our businesses and politicians, but did you know that it is estimated that more than 60% of the change needed to get to net zero carbon involves personal behavioural change by individuals and communities? Change that is focussed on just three areas: transport, home heating and diet.¹

If we act right now and adjust the way we live, then we can change the trajectory of planetary warming and eco-system collapse. We have perhaps ten years, starting now, and it's going to require nothing less than an ecological conversion of every person and every part of society. And that includes, dear reader, you.

How is the Church responding?

The Church should be leading, not following, on climate action in every place. That's why the diocese has divested from fossil fuels and developed a costed plan to achieve net zero emissions.²

In every parish we need much more engagement with Eco Church, with environmental action groups, with the political process, and with behaviour change. So far 10% of our churches have registered as an Eco Church, and we're hoping many more will this year.

Our environmental team at Church House Oxford offers tailored advice for parishes looking to reduce their environmental footprint and save money on energy bills.

The diocesan website has a wealth of information, including an ever-growing resource library oxford.anglican.org/environment

Bright Now from Operation Noah helps churches to divest from fossil fuels and advises on environmentally sensitive ways of managing church land. operationnoah.org

Eco Church is free of charge. It helps churches celebrate what they're doing to care for the environment and decide what to tackle next. ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk

The summer 2020 edition of *Pathways* magazine has more top tips and care for creation articles. Find it online at oxford.anglican.org/environment or get in touch and we'll mail you a free copy (while stocks last).

So, with expert advice on tap and a wealth of resources to draw from, what's stopping you?! Why not gather a group of people at your church and get cracking with a local care for creation plan. Be sure to let us know how you get on. 📧

Words: adapted from a talk given by Bishop Olivia, which was filmed for a major documentary to be broadcast later this year. See aljazeera.com/program/earthrise

¹ According to the Climate Change Committee: theccc.org.uk

² Net zero means balancing the amount of greenhouse gases that we put into the atmosphere with the amount we take out, so that we're not increasing the total. To get there we need to reduce the emissions for which we are responsible as far as possible, and then remove an amount from the atmosphere that is equivalent to the remainder.

Care for creation

More than 60% of the change required to get to net zero involves personal behavioural change by individuals and communities in the three areas of transport, home heating and diet. Here are nine things you can do today.

1

Stay informed – sign up for our monthly environment newsletter, *Care for Creation*, at oxford.anglican.org/email-sign-up

2

Save water – an aerated shower head makes a big difference to energy and water consumption. See savewatersavemoney.co.uk

3

Reduce plastic – remove single-use plastics from your cleaning routine. Visit ocean-saver.com to find out more.

4

Eat sustainably – rethink your diet and eat many more whole grains, vegetables, fruits and nuts, and far fewer red meats and processed foods.

5

Reduce food waste – keep the fridge at 5°C or less so food lasts longer, treat “waste food” as ingredients, start a compost heap for food that really can't be used.

6

Recycle everything – Find out how to dispose of the hard-to-recycle home and office waste not accepted by local councils: zerowastebboxes.terracycle.co.uk

7

Travel sustainably – Traveline helps you to plan journeys using all modes of public transport: traveline.info Check out sustrans.org.uk for getting back on your bike.

8

Home heating – the Energy Saving Trust have excellent guidance for efficient heating systems and preventing heat loss in the home: energysavingtrust.org.uk

9

Bank sustainably – Triodos only lends money to organisations making a positive impact, culturally, socially or environmentally: triodos.co.uk

The cost of living crisis

We asked our friends at CAP (Christians Against Poverty) how we can support each other through this storm and what actions we can take. Here is their advice.

It's a scary time for families on a low income and many are falling into debt. CAP is seeing a big increase in demand for our free debt help, plus thousands of people are attending our free budgeting courses and job clubs.

The cost of living crisis is impacting us all, but it's impacting some more than others. You may be wondering what action you can take to help those struggling. You may be tightening your belt and looking to budget more effectively. Sadly, you may be wondering how you will afford the next meal for your children or avoid falling into further debt.

Heart to help

If you want to play your part in helping people in need right now, have a chat with your church leader and find out how you can support local activities. Consider supporting a food bank.

You could financially support the work of a charity tackling poverty. CAP's work to help people across the UK out of debt is only made possible because of our amazing supporters who give what they can each month. They help thousands of people to break free from poverty every year. Even during the current crisis we are seeing hope restored, lives being transformed, and many experiencing the love of Jesus.

Pray for your friends, neighbours and anyone struggling. Why not arrange to meet with your friends and pray together?

Whatever action you feel able to take, just remember, what you do matters. God sees your heart and all your good works.

Tightening your belt

Maybe you need to tighten your belt to avoid falling into financial difficulty. Check out our CAP money tips opposite to get started.

From debt to hope

You may have fallen into serious debt and feel hopeless. You don't need to feel ashamed about it. Millions of people are struggling right now, so you are certainly not alone.

Whether you lost your job, have a disability, you're a carer, you had a relationship break up, you have been diagnosed with a serious illness or you just don't have enough income to cover your essentials, there is always hope.

No matter how you got into debt, if you make the call to CAP you won't be judged in any way. Our debt experts will help you find the best solution. 🙋



If you find yourself really struggling in debt, contact a free debt help charity, such as CAP. Call the helpline on **0800 328 0006** or visit **capuk.org**

Create a budget

Check your bank statements for the last three months and make a list of income and expenses for each month. This gives an overview of your finances and helps you see where you could save money and keep your budget balanced. If you share finances with a partner, do this together so you can both benefit.

Sort out subscriptions

A few pounds a month really add up. Ask yourself, "Do I need it?" and "Do I use it?" If you don't need it and you don't use it, cancel it. If you need it and use it, keep it. If you don't need it but you do use it, ask 'Can I afford it?' Look at your budget. Do you need to cancel or switch to a cheaper provider?

Set a weekly spending limit

Start by creating a second bank account. You can do this on most banking apps. Allocate yourself a certain amount to live off each week based on your budget, keeping it in that separate account so it's easier to see what you have left over. Try your best to stick to spending less than that amount.

Keep positive

It can be a challenge keeping to your weekly spending limit, but it feels so rewarding when you get to the end of the week and see you achieved your aim and maybe even have a little left over. Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't hit your target every week. Some weeks will be more expensive than others.

Look ahead

There will always be times when you run into one of those annoying bigger costs. Sometimes it's predictable – like car insurance or Christmas – other times it can be out of the blue, such as your fridge breaking. Put aside some savings each month for expected and unexpected costs so you're prepared when the bills come.

Use free resources

Find out if a CAP Money Course is currently running in your area by visiting capuk.org. These courses are run through local churches by a CAP Money Coach. We also recommend the Money Saving Expert website – the free tips email gives you the latest updates on how to save money.

moneysavingexpert.com

Psalm 22 is perhaps the most wonderful psalm of lament in the Bible because some of its verses prefigure the crucifixion. David's expression of suffering finds an echo, and final resolution, in the death of Jesus.

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴ In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

⁶ But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.

⁷ All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

⁸ "Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver –
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

⁹ Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.

¹⁰ On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help...

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.

²⁸ For dominion belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations...

²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.

³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,

³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

Due to space restrictions we have not been able to show the full passage. Please find the whole text at oxford.anglican.org/dwelling

Dwelling in the Word

When a psalm is read in church, you are much more likely to hear a psalm of praise than a psalm of lament. Are we missing something that can help us face the suffering in our own lives and the world?

I was once taught a circle dance from eastern Europe. It was accompanied by a mournful folk song. The movements were slow and suggested long suffering, yet the rhythm bound people together in a common expression of sorrow. It was surprising; I couldn't think of anything that we dance to in Britain that expresses shared grief. We tend to shy away from the painful parts of life.

The Bible does not do this. Its writers express faith and they express doubt. Why does God not act? Where is he? Does he care about my suffering and the suffering of the world? There are plenty of places in the Bible expressing the dark days in human life, but how often do we read them? Perhaps we feel a duty to cheer each other up!

Yet we are neglecting something important. In the tough times, which we must all face at some point, we need to know that we can ask tough questions of God and express all emotions and thoughts to him. Nothing is off limits. Moreover, the psalms of lament help us to continue to be people of faith – however tenuously – by giving us the tools we need at such times.

Jesus himself recited psalms of lament. As he hung on the cross, he uttered the first words in this psalm, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is simultaneously a cry of despair and an affirmation that the scriptures lead us into truth, the truth that will ultimately set us free.

The expression of dark thoughts continues: "O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest." (v. 2). But then comes the word yet. Psalms of lament are not just about expressing pain, they are about reaching for hope. The psalmist remembers what he has learnt about God in the past, and declares it. It is hard to reconcile the despair with hope, but our pain and suffering is not the last word on God.

The psalmist builds up further reasons for hope: "In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them." God has proved trustworthy in the past. Remembering what God has done in the past is another vital tool in Christian life. We have known the loving care of God, the one who stands above human life, in authority over it. Moreover, our experience of God is shared with others; it is not just our own experience that is relevant.

So, when you or someone you know is struggling to connect with God, feeling the frustration of faith in the "dark", remember that others have walked that way before. Your thoughts are not the last word. We are the "people yet unborn" (v. 31) who will be delivered from evil. ¶

Words: Ruth Hamilton-Jones, Communications Officer.

Bible text: New Revised Standard version, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.



Why not read Psalms 13, 42, 44, 130 for more examples of lament? What provides a turning point from despair to hope?

Prayer for a new day

Father God,

Be with us this day in all we are and do and say.

May your love indwell us and enfold us

Surround us, infuse us and ignite us.

May your love be within us, as our operating system

And before us as our guiding light.

May your love energise us and propel us to grow your kingdom.

May your love flow from us, deepening our relationship

With your creation and your creatures.

May your love be our glue, our unifier,

Our common life, binding all things together.

May your love interweave the fibres of your Church,

Your Body, your people,

Becoming the warp and the weft of an ever-expanding garment

That covers your beloved world.

May your love bubble up everywhere,

In the gritty reality of impoverished and diminished lives,

In the terror and brutality of conflict

In the darkness which dis-eases bodies and minds.

In powerful fountains of compassion and courage.

May your love be our Alpha and our Omega

Our starting point and our ending point

As we move towards the eternity of your embrace.

Bishop Olivia visited our link Diocese of Växjö in the Lutheran Church of Sweden earlier this year. We see the words of this prayer in action when spending time and sharing life with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and strengthening the bonds between us. ¶

Prayer by Bishop Olivia

Photo: Shutterstock



Find out about all our link dioceses here:
oxford.anglican.org/diocesan-links

Luke Taylor told me...



"If there is a God, why are we struggling and why is our life falling around us?" A question I asked myself daily during some of the lowest points. I had spent many years working in banking and financial

management. For a long time I was successful, but that didn't last.

Around eight years ago I found myself in serious financial difficulty. I was at my wit's end and unsure how to tackle this crisis my family was facing. I stepped into a church for the first time in my life and felt instantly at ease.

My wife, Dianne, woke up one morning and said that we needed to go to church, having never been before and having no connection to it. I initially resisted, but that week we went to our local parish church in Binfield in Berkshire and were greeted by the Revd Luke Taylor. As a non-churchgoer, I thought he didn't look like a typical vicar – he wore shorts and a hoodie and had tattoos.

During the sermon, it felt as if we were in a tunnel, it was just the two of us and Luke, he was talking directly at us. I felt a calmness and a weight lifted. God was reaching out to us, and I wanted the moment to last forever.

We continued to go back to church, hungry to know more of who God was and catch up on all the years we had missed.

Things in my life started to become okay. Once God had my attention, he started to help me recognise the parts of my life he was working in and the new things he was calling me to. I felt like I was living and no longer just existing.

We got stuck in to helping out at the church, joined an Alpha small group and set up the Lighthouse Initiative supporting local homeless and lonely people. Along with this and completing a short theological course, I felt encouraged into ministry despite only becoming a Christian a short time ago. I took on the role of churchwarden for five years, where I could journey more closely with others in the church.

I was ordained in 2021 and am now a curate in the Ascot Heath Benefice in Buckinghamshire.

Through Luke, God opened the door, and I didn't refuse to enter.

As told to Pathways by the Revd David Saunders.



Who told you? is our ongoing series of stories from Christians about coming to faith and the people who helped them along the way. We are all called to fullness in Christ and sometimes that's to ordained ministry. Find out more at [oxford.anglican.org/vocations](https://www.oxford.anglican.org/vocations)

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