



## Image of the day - Aslan, East Belfast



*Women stand near a poster of Pope Francis in Baghdad March 3, 2021. Pope Francis plans to visit Iraq March 5-8.*

## **Pope Francis says he cannot disappoint Iraqis, asks prayers for trip**

**On the same day that 10 rockets hit an air base in Iraq, Pope Francis said he had to travel to the country because he could not disappoint them, Cindy Wooden writes in The Tablet.**

“The Iraqi people are waiting for us; they awaited St. John Paul II, who was not permitted to go” in 1999, Pope Francis said March 3. “One cannot disappoint a people for the

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second time. Let us pray that this journey will be a good one.”

The Holy Father spoke about the trip at the end of his weekly general audience, telling viewers, “The day after tomorrow, God willing, I will go to Iraq for a three-day pilgrimage.” The trip is scheduled for March 5-8.

“For a long time, I have wanted to meet those people who have suffered so much; to meet that martyred church in the land of Abraham,” he said.

“Together with the other religious leaders, we also will take another step forward in fraternity among believers,” the Holy Father said before traveling to the country where most people are Muslim but coexisted for centuries with



Wind and waves at Whitehead, County Antrim

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Wind and waves at Christian and other minority communities.

“I ask you to accompany this apostolic visit with your prayers, so that it may unfold in the best possible way and bear the hoped-for fruits,” Pope Francis said.

Several hours earlier, 10 rockets landed in and near a military base about 100 miles west of Baghdad. The Ain al-Asad airbase hosts Iraqi, U.S. and other coalition troops. No casualties were reported.

The Associated Press reported that it was the first attack since the U.S. struck Iran-aligned militia targets along the Iraq-Syria border Feb. 26, creating fears of a series of alternating retaliatory attacks. - Courtesy The Tablet

## **Moderator on virtual tour**

**This Sunday will see a special moment for the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, when Right Reverend Dr David Bruce will preach in Wellington Presbyterian Church, the Ballymena congregation where he was the ordained assistant minister over 30 years ago.**

From 1985 to 1987 Dr Bruce assisted Wellington’s minister, when the congregation worshipped in the old Meeting House on the town’s Wellington Street, before he was called to serve as the minister of two Dublin congregations. While Dr Bruce will preach in the new church, which opened on the outskirts of the town in 2009, it will not be an in person service, due to the current Covid-19 restrictions. The service

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will be  
livestreamed  
across the  
Presbytery of  
Ballymena, as  
part of the  
Moderator's virtual  
tour of one of  
PCI's 19 regional  
presbyteries,  
which is taking  
place this week.

[The Rev Dr David  
Bruce at his  
Lisburn home](#)

“Presbytery tours  
are primarily  
about  
encouraging the  
local church and  
for the Moderator  
to get ‘out and about’, seeing first-hand the work that  
congregations are doing in the community on the ground,”  
Dr Bruce said.

“Each Moderator does four tours, during their term of office  
and each one, which is organised by the local presbytery,  
normally involves between 15 and 30 engagements over the  
course of the week. Beginning and ending on a Sunday,  
they are essentially an opportunity for us to meet and thank



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those who contribute to the life of the church and community life in a wider context.”

Six years ago, Dr Ian McNie undertook a tour of the Presbytery as Moderator. He visited six congregations, which included a mid-week Gospel Rally and a United Service. Dr McNie had two breakfast meetings with ministers and Ballymena town centre traders, visited schools and also met farmers at the town’s livestock mart. By necessity Dr Bruce’s tour will be very different.

Speaking about this week’s tour, Dr Bruce said, “Yes it will be different, and like my three previous tours it will be a mainly ‘virtual tour’, but I am really looking forward to it all the same. We have scheduled four online meetings with ministers, where we will have some time to pray together and talk. I am exceptionally thankful to all my brothers and sisters in Christ across our denomination, who have carried on pastoring their people and sharing the Gospel in such unprecedented times and want to thank our ministers personally in the Presbytery of Ballymena for what they have done and continue to do. Listening to their experiences over this last while, and seeing how they are, will be an important part of my tour.”

Dr Bruce continued, “I have also pre-recorded a message based on 1 Corinthians 1:9 on the subject of True Fellowship for a virtual mid-week rally that will also be taking place. Then, of course, I will be back in the pulpit and preaching from Wellington, alongside Rev Alistair Bates, which I am really looking forward to. It will be my first time back preaching there since 2009.”

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Looking ahead to Sunday, Dr Bruce will be preaching on Psalm 126, looking at the longevity of Christian witness, the cost that there is to following Jesus and how, as the Psalmist says, disciples ‘sow in tears...’ but ‘...will reap with songs of joy...’(verse 5) as God works his purposes out in all circumstances.

## **The Presbytery of Ballymena**

The Presbytery of Ballymena is made up of 31 congregations that range in size from 39 to 735 families, making up a local Presbyterian community of just under 20,000 individuals. Bounded by the North Channel on the east Antrim coast, the Presbytery extends southwards to Eskylane, then west to Tamlaght O’ Crilly, in County Londonderry, and northwards to Rasharkin, through Clough and Newtowncrommelin to Cushendall. The Presbytery also takes in the nine glens that make up the famous Glens of Antrim.

Speaking about this week’s tour, Clerk of the Presbytery, Rev Joseph Andrews, minister of Ballee Presbyterian Church, said in a statement, “This Moderator’s tour will be radically different from any which we have ever hosted before. Normally the Moderator would preach in four congregations and attend the Stated meeting of Presbytery. He would meet a wide range of people and undertake a busy schedule of visits and meetings involving industrial, agricultural, commercial, community and healthcare settings. He would meet with the Mayor of the Borough and see at first hand, various activities in local congregations.

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“This time the Moderator will meet virtually with four groups of ministers, speak at a virtual Midweek Rally, which will be available on You Tube. He will also take part in a live streamed service from Wellington congregation this Sunday.”

Mr Andrews continued, “It is disappointing that the 2021 Tour has had to be remodelled, especially as Dr Bruce served as Assistant Minister in Wellington Street congregation from 1985 to 1987, but in common with the wider Church, Ballymena Presbytery wishes to protect all its people at this time and prays for a successful roll out of the vaccination programme and, in time, a return to a more normal pattern of Church life.”

The Clerk of Presbytery concluded by saying, “I would take this opportunity, on behalf of Presbytery, to thank all our people, in all 31 congregations, for their responsible behaviour and their continued interest in, and support for, the ongoing work of the Church over the past year. It has been encouraging to see how congregations have imaginatively made use of the opportunities available to continue to declare the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

“As a Presbytery we have been mindful of those who have experienced bereavement, whose health has suffered, whose family life has been disrupted, or who have faced redundancy or financial hardship, and assure them all that they are remembered in prayer at every meeting of the Presbytery Standing Commission,” Mr Andrews said.





## Retirement of long-serving County Cork church organist

Freda Salter-Townshend playing the organ at St. Barrahanes Church in Castletownshend. Photo: Anne Minihane.

**Late last year - 2020 - Mrs Freda Salter Townshend - organist in the Church of Saint Barrahanes, Castletownshend, County Cork for the previous 21 years, retired.**

From 2004 Freda was also organist in Abbeystrewry Parish Church in Skibbereen. Before moving to Abbeystrewry Parish she was also organist of Snaves Church near Bantry, while she was a teacher at Saint Brendan's National School in Bantry.

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Recently, the rector, the Rev. John Ardis thanked Freda for her valued ministry in the Church. He paid tribute to the time and energy she gave in enhancing the liturgy so well over the years.

The rector said, "Music is a very important part of liturgy. Over the years Freda has given comfort to mourners at Funeral services and joy to those being married or celebrating baptisms. I would like to thank her for her generosity, for all the practice and planning she has given. We are all grateful for the huge dedication Freda has shown to the life of the Church.

Freda was presented with flowers by the rector as a token of the parishes' appreciation of her ministry throughout the years.

## **Choirs struggle amid singing uncertainty**

**Cathedral choirs are struggling to survive, amid frustration that the Government's lockdown plan fails to make clear when singing can safely return, Catherine Pepinster writes in the Daily Telegraph**

The Cathedral Music Trust, a charity, has been inundated with appeals for help with 40 choirs making requests totalling £1.5 million.

It is a major rise on the last round of bids in December when 30 choirs asked the trust for £1 million worth of aid, but the charity could only meet a third of the requests.

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Peter Allwood, chair of the trust, said: “The cathedrals need help if they are to be able to restore music when normality returns.

“But the Government’s most recent roadmap does not make it clear when that will be. At the moment it is not looking good for Easter.”

Running a choir costs between £100,000 to £500,000 a year, yet cathedrals face a continuing lack of income from congregations and tourists.

Last year, around £7 million was awarded from the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund to help cathedrals offset the loss of income during the pandemic.

Nick Edmonds, from the Church of England, said: “We urge the Government to commit to sustained investment so that our cathedrals can continue to serve their communities.”

## **Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars**

**Climate Sunday** - Local churches across Britain and Ireland are encouraged to hold a climate-focused service on any Sunday before 5 September 2021. Free resources are available to suit every tradition and style of worship to help with holding a climate-focused service. Visit <https://www.climatesunday.org/> to learn more!

**Irish Churches Covid resources** - Irish Churches have gathered in one place useful info for churches at this time of

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covid19. Resources from member churches for worship and young people, ideas on helping out, clergy self-care and more. Will be continually updated - [irishchurches.org/covid19](http://irishchurches.org/covid19)

**Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue** - a 9 March webinar—the third in a series of seven on bilateral dialogues—will focus on “Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: History, Results, Reception” as well as the Canterbury Statement “Stewards of Creation: A Hope-Filled Ecology,” a statement on ecology...

[oikoumene.org/news/anglican-...](http://oikoumene.org/news/anglican-...)

**Trócaire and St. Patrick’s College Maynooth annual Lent lecture** - will be given by Cardinal Antonio Luis Gokim Tagle Cardinal Tagle will address the online event on the evening of March 9th. The theme of his address will be ‘Caring for the human family and our common home’.

Register here: <https://www.trocaire.org/news/cardinal-tagle-to-deliver-lent-lecture/>

**Church Army brand new issue of Catalyst** - is out now!

- 📌 30 Years of Faithful Service - an interview with Des Scott
- 📌 New appointments in Wales
- 📌 Church Resources

Read it here 🖱️ [adobe.ly/2NyPe6l](https://adobe.ly/2NyPe6l)

**Bible Reading Fellowship Lent journey** - Join BRF on a journey through Lent and the life and passion of Jesus, drawing on Andrew Roberts’ new book, Holy Habits:

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Following Jesus, a devotional guide exploring how Jesus demonstrated the ten Holy Habits.

Find free video resources for churches and small groups to use or join our online home group with Holy Habits pioneer, Andrew Roberts.

<https://www.holyhabits.org.uk/online-home-group?fbclid>

<https://www.homegroups.org.uk/?>

## **Tribute - The Rev Canon Jane Sinclair**

### **First woman Rector of St Margaret's, Westminster, who strengthened links with Parliament**

The Rev Canon Jane Sinclair who has died aged 64, was a Canon of Westminster Abbey and the first woman Rector of St Margaret's, Westminster.

Known as "the parish church of the House of Commons", St Margaret's has been under the aegis of the Abbey since 1973 and the rectors have been appointed from among the canons.

Jane Sinclair exercised a valued ministry to the regular congregations and also helped to strengthen the partnership of the two churches with parliament, Whitehall and other public-sector neighbours.

She went to the Abbey in 2014 initially as Canon Steward, with oversight of its work of education, welcoming the many visitors and pastoral care of staff and volunteers.

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At about the same time, however, she was diagnosed with cancer; and when Canon Andrew Tremlett was preferred to the Deanery of Durham in 2016, it was thought it would be less strenuous for her if she succeeded him as Rector.

By long-standing convention, the Rector had also been Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, but in 2010 John Bercow broke with precedent and appointed his chaplain from elsewhere.

This might have seriously weakened the relationship between St Margaret's, the Abbey and the House; but the Westminster Abbey Institute, founded in 2013 to engage more deeply with the political and administrative communities in the vicinity, proved highly effective in providing opportunities for lectures and discussions at various levels.

When Jane Sinclair came to chair it in 2018, she was focused and efficient, with a natural ability to diffuse tension, though she could be quite fierce in standing her ground when necessary.

Her illness was soon becoming more aggressive, however, increasingly affecting her ability to function fully, and in April 2020 she took early retirement.

Jane Elizabeth Margaret Sinclair was born on March 3 1956, the daughter of Ian Sinclair, later knighted for his services as principal legal adviser at the Foreign Office during the Falklands conflict. Some of Jane Sinclair's childhood was spent in Manhattan when her father was legal adviser to the UK mission to the United Nations.

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Years later in London, she found a seat on a busy Tube train. The man next to her was engrossed in his newspaper and she buried her head in a book as commuters do. It was only when the man stood to disembark that she recognised him as her father.

Following education at Westonbirt School in Gloucestershire, Jane read Modern History at St Hugh's College, Oxford. After graduating in 1978 she trained for the ministry at St John's College, Nottingham, where she gained a BA in Theology. These were the days before the ordination of women as deacons or priests, so from 1983 she served for three years as a lay deaconess in the south London parish of St Paul, Herne Hill.

She then returned to St John's as Chaplain and lecturer in Liturgy and Pastoral Studies. In the same year, 1986, she became a member of the General Synod's Liturgical Commission for the quinquennium, leading up to the publication of Common Worship services authorised for use as an alternative to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. With a gift for drafting texts that were scripturally sound yet verbally resonant, she was particularly involved in the creation of a new psalter which accurately translated the original Hebrew psalms yet also reflected the familiar nuances of Coverdale's 16th century version.

In 1987 Jane Sinclair was among the first women to be ordained as deacons in the Church of England and seven years later was one of the C of E's first women priests. While still a deacon she was appointed Canon Precentor of Sheffield Cathedral, a post she held for 10 years from 1993.

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Her lively intelligence, innate cheerfulness and wicked sense of humour helped to raise and sustain the morale of the cathedral community.

She enabled the successful introduction of the new services in the building's difficult liturgical space, making a vital contribution to plans for the eventual reconfiguration of the cathedral's interior.

Jane Sinclair moved from Sheffield to become Vicar of Rotherham in 2003 and became very much involved in the affairs of the town.

She helped to create a new community centre and was nominated as Rotherham Businesswoman of the Year. She was also for a time Secretary of the Convocation of York before being appointed in 2007 as Archdeacon of Stow and Lindsey in the diocese of Lincoln. During her seven years in office she was a highly respected colleague and friend to many in the diocese.

Well regarded as a wise and generous pastor, Sinclair was an engaging preacher, sometimes illustrating her sermons with a short story she had penned.

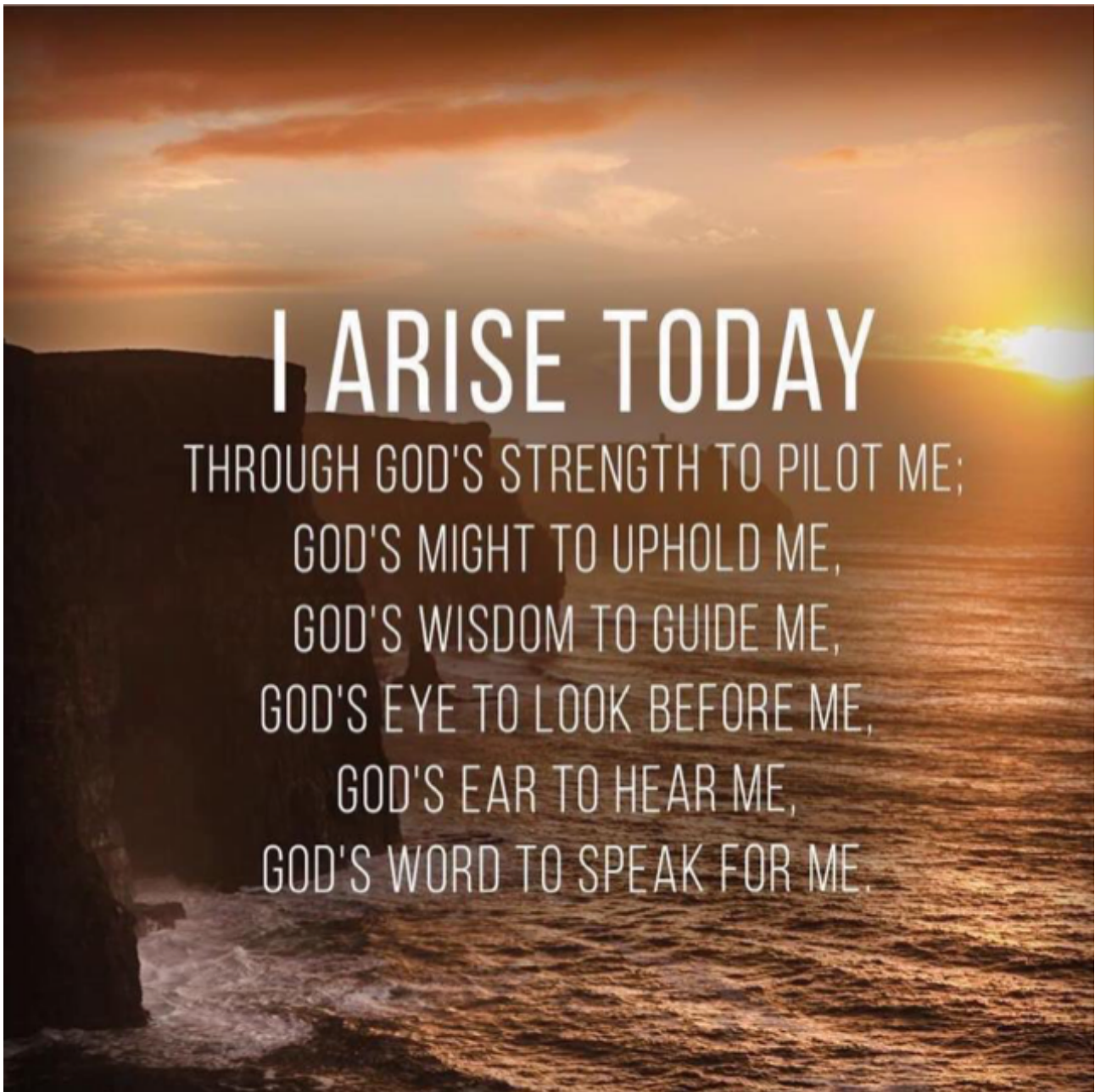
She possessed an excellent singing voice and an interest in abstract art. She delighted in bright colours and the clarity of the light she found in Orkney, where she holidayed.

Jane Sinclair's partner of many years, Gillian Cooper, and her beloved dog, Poppy, were at her bedside when she died.



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**The Rev Canon Jane Sinclair, born March 3 1956, died  
January 14 2021**



## **Pointers for prayer**

Heavenly Father,  
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,  
and grew closer to you in the desert:  
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)

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that we may witness to your saving love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

CMSI reports that in Gitega Diocese in Burundi in a  
wonderful service in January, 28 priests, 25 deacons and  
three pastors were ordained. Give thanks for their calling  
and pray that God will guide them through His Holy Spirit  
and provide for them and their families.

Hold in your hands, Lord  
our families and friends  
our neighbours  
those whom we worry about  
and those who worry for us.  
And in these same hands  
hold every family,  
especially those for whom today  
has brought new burdens  
and fresh sorrows - The Iona Community

Today we pray for those with symptoms of cancer. A new  
study shows that almost half of those with a potential

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symptom didn't see a GP during the first wave of the pandemic, because they did not want to burden the NHS.

Today we pray for countries unable to access vaccines. The UN secretary general has criticised the unfair distribution of Covid vaccines, identifying that 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

Pray for the launches of new Church Army centres of mission in Rochdale, Gwent Valley, North Sutton and Ipswich; that these will launch as planned and new staff will find ways to engage with their communities when they are appointed.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

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Holy God,  
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:  
set straight our crooked hearts,  
and bend our wills to love your goodness  
and your glory  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all  
things,  
now and for ever.

## Speaking to the Soul

Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put  
my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Saviour and my  
God!

Psalm 42:11 NLT

We all face times of discouragement when nothing seems to  
be going right. That's an inevitable part of the ups and  
downs of life. But sometimes those times of discouragement  
can dominate all our thinking, and that is clearly how it was  
for the psalmist. He reflects that his tears have been his  
food day and night and people were taunting him all day  
long with the words, "Where is your God?" He thinks back



on those happy days when he would lead the worship procession up to the Temple, but that's all a distant memory now. He paints a very sad picture. But his feelings of despair don't have the last word, because amidst the grief he knows that God will not let him down. He puts his hope in God knowing that there will come a time when he will be able to praise God again.

We are told that depression is extremely common and that about 50% of people will experience it at some time in their life. At any one time about 20% of people suffer from a degree of depression. If this is your own personal experience then I encourage you to take heart from the psalmist. Amidst the confusion and darkness of your

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depression I urge you to hang on to the fact that God has never, and will never, abandon you. He loves you and is committed to you whatever happens.

For many of us depression is outside our personal experience. We need to be acutely sensitive to those many people we will work and live with for whom this is a deep and agonizing experience. We need to be ready to listen sympathetically to their experience with the humility that comes from knowing that they are walking a path that we have not trodden. We need to be very prayerful and offer our companionship before anything else, in the knowledge that God wants to be their hope too.

## QUESTION

What have you learnt about God when you have faced times of discouragement?

## PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the honesty of the psalmist. We praise you for the confidence that he had in you even when everything seemed to be going wrong. Amen.



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