

Sunday 6th March 2022

Readings Deuteronomy 26:1-11
 Romans 10:8-13 ([Living Bible](#))

Exploring

Reflection

Our reading from Deuteronomy is all about roots, and it reminds us that Israel was a wandering people with the words 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor', and we hear again some of the roots of Israel. Roots are important, and many people enjoy tracing their family roots, but what about our church roots. Israel came into possession of land and set up camp, how did Edward Street end up in possession of the land on which it stands? What are your personal roots, what led you to this place and these people? We all have a story, and each church has a story.

Israel did not remain in the land and history gives us the very mixed fortunes of the people of Israel, even to this day. The church which calls itself Edward Street has been settled here in this place for some time but outside circumstances have changed and now we sense a change is necessary, but we are not yet sure exactly what that will mean for the church, but it will be revealed through prayer and guidance as we reconcile head and heart to discern the path.

Paul invites the Roman Church to look back to those days of Moses and to recognise that life has changed, belief has changed, and Jesus has introduced a new dimension beyond the law. Salvation, to live life in the fullness of our humanity and let go of all that holds us back, is, he says, within our grasp already, it is in our hearts and on our lips. When we believe in the message of Jesus and share that message with others we grow and change, we become more loving and more trusting in the oneness that is God. It is a salvation which is for everyone, Jew or Greek, for we are all the same, we are children of God, one in God's love.

Paul goes on to encourage the Roman Church to be a church of proclamation, to share the good news. It is as important today as it was then that we have the courage to share our story and the place of God within our lives, as revealed through the message of Jesus. That message is a universal message, sharing it is not about making more members for the church but about releasing others to find God in whatever way is relevant to them, to change the world one person at a time by encouraging a more loving outlook. Paul puts it this way, to experience this wonderful opportunity to embrace the fullness of our humanity we need to know it is possible, we need to hear about it. If nobody tells us, we may never fulfil our potential. How can this happen if we don't do our bit?

The decisions we make about the future may change how we meet, may even mean the end of Edward Street Church but they will not change our personal responsibility to share the message of Jesus whether we do it as individuals or as part of another church. How will you live out your faith in a new way? There may be a new land, or it may be that your will spread out like seeds on the wind and become prophets of love wherever you go, but there will still be a task to do.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent, a period of reflection and preparation as we move towards the celebration of Easter day. One of the traditional readings for today is the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Temptation takes many forms, it may be about seeing and taking an easy way out whilst knowing it is wrong, it may be about wanting something that is not yours to have, or it may be about not being honest with yourself. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us there is a time for every purpose under heaven, there is a time to stay still and a time to move on. We have been through a lot in the past two years. We have stayed still while the ground around shifted, and life will never be the same again. Remember though, Jesus told the disciples that following him was about change, they were to leave things behind, and they would never be the same again. This is where we find ourselves today, and if we are honest we have given in to the temptation to hold on to a settled land for too

long. With every generation tradition changes, adapts to new circumstances but we have not had new generations in the church for a long time and tradition had become fixed and we knew this, but we were tempted to ignore it because to do anything else meant change, and we have forgotten how to do change in the church. Now, having been forced to let go of the way we have done things for a long time and learn new ways we find ourselves in a new landscape and it all feels strange so the temptation is to try and go back but it will not work for we know there is no going back on the journey of faith. It is not just the landscape which has changed of course, we have changed and the way we do things in this new time will be different, we need to find the way forward that is right for us, and right for our purpose in the world as it is now, a world that has changed since March 2020.

The experience of the last two years has opened up questions, revealed challenges, created new needs and made us all more aware of other people. It has also made us more aware of the importance of relationships. The message of Jesus has never been more relevant, but we need to find relevant ways to share that message in this new world. Saying it in the same old way will not allow it to be heard by those who have already chosen not to hear it that way. We have been shaken out of our complacency and now is the time to dream dreams. As we consider the future, the challenge is how we can best enable each other to proclaim the message of love. It may be together; it may be each on a new path but if we believe then the words are on our lips and in our hearts and we will continue to sing a song of love to the world wherever we find ourselves. Amen.

Suggested Hymns

[Today I awake and God is before me](#)

Father I place into your hands

[Sent by the Lord am I](#)

[Living God your joyful Spirit](#)

As the world watches the horror of the situation in Ukraine unfold we can feel helpless. I found this poem by John Roedel. Light a candle for peace and love and read this poem and allow it to fill you.

[The Cosmic Dancer](#)