

Bribie Beacon

OCTOBER 2023

**St Peter's Anglican Church
Banya Street Bribie Island**

Anglican
Church
St Peter's Bribie Island



SEASON OF CREATION

The Season of Creation is the annual Christian celebration of prayer and action for our common home. Together, the ecumenical family around the world unites to pray, protect, and advocate for God's creation. The Season of Creation commenced on 1 September and runs through till 4 October. The theme for this year is "Listen to the Voice of Creation". These are voices of those who suffer the impacts of climate change. These are voices of people who hold generational wisdom about how to live gratefully within the limits of the land. These are voices of a diminishing diversity of more-than-human species. It is the voice of the Earth.

Seasons of Creation Prayer

Loving Creator, we thank you for your wisdom, multiplicity, and humour revealed in the landscapes, plants and creatures around us. Release, we pray, your creation to flourish in the care of your renewed people, to be whole, clean, wild, and full of your vivacity, as governments put away divisiveness to act with courageous truth, as businesses put away our greed to seek long term fruitfulness, and as each of us puts the needs of our future generations ahead of our own, until your creation reflects the entire spectrum of your glory Amen. *(Rev Dr Margaret Wesley)*

WEEKLY SERVICES

Sunday - 7.30am & 9.30am

Wednesday - 10am

PARISH CONTACT DETAILS

PARISH PRIEST / RECTOR

Rev Steven Schwarzrock

CHURCHWARDENS

Margaret Peterson 5497 6978

Greg Rollason 3408 1998

Di Thatcher 0409 846 471

PARISH OFFICE

(Wed & Fri - 9am to 12pm)

3408 3191

bribieisland@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

WEBSITE

www.stpetersbribie.org.au

ONLINE GIVING BY CREDIT CARD OR DEBIT CARD

<https://www.bpoint.com.au/pay/TIM/?BillCode=1730050>

ONLINE GIVING BY DIRECT DEPOSIT

Ac Name - Bribie Island Parish

BSB - 704-901

Account Number - 00000040

POSTAL ADDRESS

PO Box 1087 Bongaree 4507

LOCATION

10-12 Banya Street Bongaree

PARISH NOTICES

Neighbourhood Centre – Food delivered to B.I.D.N.C. for September totalled 27.5kg. Thank you to all who gave. Greg Rollason.

Farewell to Fr Steven – Fr Steven will conclude his active ministry here at St Peter's on Sunday 1 October as he has accepted the position as the next Rector of the Parish of Stafford. On Sunday 1 October there will only be one service at St Peter's at 8.30am which will be followed by a morning tea in Coinda. After the farewell Fr Steven will be on leave until he is commissioned as the next Rector of Stafford Parish on Sunday 26 November at 5pm.

Parish Contacts – If you need any assistance with matters related to St Peter's please contact the Churchwardens whose contact details are on the front of the Beacon. Until the appointment of a Locum, the Parish phone will be diverted through to Debbie, our Volunteer Parish Administrator.

Clergy Relief – While Fr Steven is on leave the Sunday services will be taken by Fr Doug Frith and Fr James Oulds. The Wednesday services will be taken by Bishop Bruce Clark and Rev Marilyn Cullen. All other matter should be directed to the Churchwarden. For pastoral emergencies please contact a Churchwarden and they will seek a minister to assist.

Appointment of a New Priest for St Peter's - At the AGM each year the Parish elects 3 nominators to work with the Diocesan Presentation Board to seek the appointment of a Parish Priest. Our Parish Nominators are Di Thatcher, Margaret Peterson, Greg Rollason. All Parishioners are invited to submit names of clergy they feel would be suitable to be our next Parish Priest. Please support your Parish Nominators by assuring them of your prayers and by not asking them for updates. The process will take as long as it takes, and it is critical that all deliberations of the Presentation Board remain completely confidential.

Installation of New Archbishop - Archbishop-elect Jeremy Greaves will be installed as Archbishop of Brisbane at St John's Cathedral on Saturday 16th December 2023 at 10.30am.

Common Communion Cup - Anyone who has concerns or medical conditions with the common communion cup are encouraged to maintain the practice of communion in one kind (the bread only). For those taking communion in one kind be assured that Christ is fully present, and nothing is lacking taking communion in one kind only. The practice of intinction (dipping the bread in the cup) is not allowed. Communicants are welcome to either stand or kneel while at the altar rail.

Health and Safety Notice – If you feel you may be contagious with cold and flu symptoms, please refrain from attending church activities. All parishioners are encouraged to maintain good hygiene practices and respect others personal space.

Milestones - It is our tradition at St Peter's to note people's birthdays in weekly and monthly publications, including special celebrations like 80th and 90th birthdays. If you would prefer not to have your special celebrations and birthdays noted in these notifications, please let the office know.

Rosters - Interested in joining our worship team as an av operator, reader or intercessor? Please speak to Margaret Peterson (5497 6978).

PARISH PRAYER POINTS

Those celebrating Birthdays - October Birthdays – Glenda Norvill (2nd), Elva Woods (7th), Anna Bonnici (14th), Janet Berry (20th), Jan Jones (20th), Les Baker (27th).

Those in Need – Anne Dowd, Greg Bean, Vivienne Bourne, Vicki, Linda Peterson

Continuing Prayer List - Krista-Liisa Pulkkinen, Elva Woods, Kaye Bush, Phillipa Booth, Elizabeth, Nicholas & Blake Kubler.

Prayer for a New Parish Priest - Bountiful God, give to this parish a faithful pastor who will faithfully speak your word and minister your sacraments; an encourager who will equip your people for ministry and enable us to fulfil our calling. Give to those who will choose, wisdom, discernment and patience, and to us give warm and generous hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Prayer for our New Archbishop-Elect - Loving God, bless Jeremy, now called to be Archbishop of Brisbane; fill him with your truth, and clothe him with holiness, that he may preach your word, and care for your people; Give him compassion and wisdom, sustain him with your Spirit and inspire him with vision. We ask in the name of the one who calls, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Anglicare Australia - God of Life-Giving Creation, You call us to act justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with you. We pray for the member organisations of Anglicare Australia working across this vast and ancient land. Enable us as we strive to meet human need through loving service and to build communities of resilience, hope and justice. Encourage us to work in mutual partnership to effect positive change. Empower the people we serve to reach their full potential, especially those who experience disadvantage and injustice. Guide us in our advocacy for social justice and strengthen our determination to respond with compassion. Remind us to care for ourselves and each other as we face the challenges of our work, and as we seek reconciliation, healing and community transformation. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our servant leader and friend. Amen.

School Chaplaincy - Julie Godfrey (Bribie High School) and Sean Godfrey (Bribie Island State School).

Prayer Chain - St Peter's operates a Prayer Chain ministry. If there is someone or something you would like to have placed on the Prayer Chain, please email bribieisland@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or contact the Parish Office.

Weekly and Continuing Prayer Lists - To add someone to the prayer list please email bribieisland@anglicanchurchsq.org.au



Our AMUA Branch provides for the use of members of the Parish “Care Bags” and “Prayer Shawls”. These are available in the narthex for all parishioners to take and offer to people they know who may be in need of support and care.



SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 26

Readings - Exodus 17.1-7; Psalm 78.1-4,11-16; Philippians 2; Matthew 21.23-32.

Sentence - Come, let us return to the Lord, that we may live before him. (*Hosea 6.1a, 2b*)

Prayer of the day - Grant, O merciful God, that your people may have that mind that was in Christ Jesus, who emptied himself, and took the form of a servant, and in humility became obedient even to death. For you have highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, Jesus Christ, the Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in everlasting glory. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - The Gospel passage for this Sunday contains another challenging parable, but it is important to note the setting has changed. Jesus is now in Jerusalem causing political turmoil. As we move through the Gospel of Matthew we skip ahead in the story, in particular skipping over Jesus' triumphal entry in Jerusalem and Jesus cleansing the temple. As a result Jesus comes face to face with the Jewish elite, the most powerful Jews. The chief priests and elders approach Jesus and ask "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus responds with a question they choose not to answer, creating the space for Jesus to respond with three parables, the parable of the two sons, the parable of the wicked tenants and the parable of the wedding banquet. It is not that the chief priests were bad people, they did strive to keep peace between Rome and the Jews, but they also upheld a religious worship system that limited God's justice and grace. The chief priests not only controlled what happened in the temple, but also controlled large parcels of land in Judea and beyond, making them virtually identical with the rich, powerful landowners who are the frequent targets of Jesus' parables. "Elders of the people" is an ironic ascription; it soon becomes clear that the chief priests and elders do not represent the people; instead they both fear and seek to manipulate the crowds to carry out their will. Since the chief priests and elders saw themselves as the elite and powerful, they wanted to know by whose authority Jesus was acting upon. Before he will answer them, they must tell him about John's baptism: was it from heaven or merely human? This question puts them in a bind. They know that a denial of the legitimacy of John's baptism will not play well with the crowds, whose support they need. On the other hand, if they affirm that John's baptism came from heaven, he will ask them why they did not submit themselves to it. Their answer, "we don't know", we should imagine these words being delivered under their breath. They have lost. With this exchange, the challenge itself is formally ended, but Jesus will continue to occupy the temple and to defend his authority to be there until he is ready to leave of his own accord. Jesus, however, is not yet done with the chief priests and elders of the people. He extends his challenge to their authority by speaking in parables. The one in today's Gospel passage is a version of the "two sons" tradition (similar to Luke's parable of the prodigal and his older brother). The two sons tradition itself begins with Cain and Abel and includes Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Aaron and Moses, and David and his brothers, a tradition laden with motifs of envy and betrayal, struggles for power, and sometimes reconciliation. Because this parable is relatively short, we may miss the multiple points of resonance with Israel's foundational stories. Jesus calls the sons in this parable "children," just as Israel was often identified as God's (sometimes rebellious) children. The vineyard is a stock symbol in Jewish tradition for Israel. Jesus is, therefore, not asking his adversaries to comment on random, fictitious brothers, but to locate themselves within Israel's foundational and continuing stories. The distinction between the two brothers turns on action versus word. Jesus and his adversaries agree that only one son does the will of the father, the son who says "no," but goes nonetheless into the vineyard to work. Actions speak louder than words. Jesus uses this exchange to expose what the leaders really thought about John. The chief priests' and elders' failure to believe and respond to John reveals the truth about where they stood.

Questions for Scripture Reflection

1. In an age of self promotion, what does emptying oneself in humility look like in everyday life? (Philippians 2:5-8)
2. In various settings, which of the two sons are you, and what can you relate to about each son? (Matthew 21:28-30)

SUNDAY 8 OCTOBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 27

Readings - Exodus 20.1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Psalm 19; Philippians 3; Matthew 21.33-46.

Sentence - The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. (*Matthew 21.42*)

Prayer of the day - Almighty God, your Son Jesus was the stone rejected by the builders, and, by your doing, he has been made the chief cornerstone: grant that, by the power of his Spirit working in us, we may become living stones built up into your dwelling place, a temple holy and acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - In the Gospel reading for last Sunday we heard Jesus responding to the Chief Priest and the Elders. After they ask him by what authority he does these things, he asked them a question about John the Baptist's authority that they refused to answer. He then taught the first of three parables, today's Gospel passage contains the second, that being another vineyard parable. In this parable Jesus draws upon Isaiah's own parable about a love-song for a planted vineyard from Isaiah 5. In Matthew's narrative, Jesus tied together broader themes in order to critique the temple leadership responsible for proper care of the people of God. In Jesus' parable there was a problem not with the vineyard's production but with the tenants themselves. These were extremely violent tenant farmers, harming and slaughtering the various groups of slaves sent by the landowner. The rationale for their brutality and murderous ways was stated explicitly when the son visited: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance" (21:38). On the surface, the landowner's decision to send his son in light of the tragedy of his servants seemed unwise. But, Jesus' parable did not highlight this act as foolish; this was not the parable of the foolish landowner. Rather, in an honour and shame culture, the landowner's decision to send his son as emissary was appropriate since he could expect proper respect for his appointed heir. Culturally, the leasing of land to tenant farmers was a common experience in the first century. Landowners could expect tenants to turn over (a portion of) the crop. Those who failed to meet the landowner's standards would be removed from the land and landowning elite could usually pay others to remove them forcefully if necessary. In reality, many in Jesus' audience would have understood the experience of the farmers all too well. If they chose not to "pay" the landowner, as was the case in Jesus' parable, the landowner would find new tenants without doubt. So, Jesus' story highlighted the landowner's patience in this regard and, perhaps, a certain kind of naivete. In addition to Jesus' parabolic twist on Isaiah's vineyard, Jesus provided a citation from Psalm 118. His scriptural citation shifted the focus of the parable altogether, from a critique of the tenants/leadership to a statement about the son/stone. The story was no longer about the vineyard, the produce, or the tenant farmers. Now, Jesus turned attention toward the abused son: "they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him" (21:39). For Matthew, this twist was an essential one in which the abused son became "the stone that the builders rejected" (21:42), which, in turn, determined who was in or out. The son who was sent must be an allegory for God's son, Jesus. The tenant farmers, who represented the temple leadership, would be replaced by other tenants. And, what looked like a landowner's naivete was really God's plan: "this was the Lord's doing" (21:42).

Questions for Scripture Reflection

1. What do you think should be the place of the Ten Commandments in the life of a Christian? (Exodus 20:1-17)
2. In daily life, how can we receive God's gifts with gratitude yet view all things as rubbish? (Philippians 3:7-9)
3. What fruits of the kingdom do you think Jesus was referring to, and what do they look like today? (Matthew 21:43)

SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 28

Readings - Exodus 32.1-14; Psalm 106.1-6, 20-24; Philippians 4; Matthew 22.1-14.

Sentence - This is our God for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25.9)

Prayer of the day - Saving and healing God, you have promised that those who have died with Christ shall live with him: grant us grace to be continually thankful for all you have done for us, and in that thankfulness to be eager to serve and live for others, so that we and all your children may rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - In the Gospel passage for this Sunday we hear of a royal wedding, and those with invitations refused to come. When the second call comes, they treat the invitation as a joke and go about their business. More than bad manners are at stake, for some invitees even assault and kill the servants delivering the invitation. In his anger the king then escalates the confrontation by sending in his troops to destroy both the perpetrators and their city. Apparently the king has judged their rejection to be the opening round of a rebellion that must be quelled. With the party ready, the king is determined that the wedding will go forward, and so the servants are sent out again, this time to the very limits of the territory. (That is what the term means that lies behind the "main streets" in verse 9). They are to bring in everyone, good and bad, so that the hall will be filled. What is important for the king is that people are in attendance. Matthew's Gospel identifies their worthiness as important, yet the worthiness of the guests is not an ethical worthiness as both good and bad are brought in, rather worthiness comes from the ability to recognise the urgency of the invitation and to respond. This is where the specifics of the story evoke biblical traditions and images that would have made its point clear to Matthew's readers. For example, the parable is introduced as something to be compared to the "kingdom of heaven." In Matthew's careful Jewish piety that minimised the use of the Greek word "God" (a carry-over of the refusal to pronounce the divine name in Hebrew), as well the use of "king" as a common metaphor for God, the story is evidently about a divine banquet. Further, a wedding can be a metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel (Isaiah 54:5-6; 62:5; Hosea 2:16-20), and a banquet a sign of the covenant between them (Isaiah 25:6-10; 55:1-3). "Worthiness" thus involves being able to recognise the king's "wedding banquet" for what it is and responding to it as one's top priority. The final invitation that will fill the banquet hall is inclusive in the extreme. In that sense it mirrors other instances of Jesus' table community that embodied the hospitality and inclusiveness. Questions of social status or observance of Torah regulations, or even one's ethical behaviour are set aside in favour of the urgency of the host's plan. That radical inclusiveness comes to a sudden halt, however, when the king encounters a guest who is not properly attired. The parable-within-the parable has no parallels outside of Matthew, so it must reflect his particular agenda. The language of the parable ranges from sarcasm, with the address of the man as Friend in verse 12, to apocalyptic violence in verse 13. The details of ejection into the "outer darkness" with "weeping and gnashing of teeth" invoke earlier declarations of judgment. Clearly the issue is not the man's clothing, but rather something else about how he presents himself in this ultimate moment. We are left without a list of specific criteria that move a person from the list of the many "called," to that of the few "chosen" (verse 14), but it appears that Matthew envisions further accountability beyond one's initial response of discipleship, our "yes!" to God's invitation to the banquet. It maybe helpful to consider the words in James 2 where it is affirmed that one's faith can be seen in one's works, by which he means deeds, especially deeds of justice and compassion. So there may be a danger in accepting the invitation of discipleship if we fail to clothe ourselves in deeds of justice and compassion.

Questions for Scripture Reflection

1. How did the relationship between God and Israel go so terribly wrong? (Exodus 32)
2. What biases do you need to put aside for the common good of our community? (Philippians 4)
3. What do we need to wear to the wedding banquet? (Matthew 22)

SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 29

Readings - Exodus 33.12-23; Psalm 99; 1 Thessalonians 1.1-10; Matthew 22.15-33.

Sentence - Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.
(*Matthew 22.21*)

Prayer of the day - Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: grant that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in proclaiming the cross to be the way that leads to life eternal; though Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection - Politically, just about the only thing Pharisees and Herodians have in common is that they don't like Jesus. So, they hold their noses, put aside their many differences for a moment, and come together to pose Jesus a question that they hope will put him between a rock and a hard place: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" If he answers that the taxes are lawful, he will give offense to the Pharisees and the many in the crowds who hate the empire's constant meddling, not to mention the poor who are especially burdened by this tax. On the other hand, if he speaks out against the tax, it won't take long for the Herodians, who are loyalists to Rome, to take news of such seditious talk back to the powers that be. It is a well-laid trap, and even more so because it is prefaced by a flattering reminder that Jesus has a reputation for fearless truth-telling, not political manoeuvring. Jesus is not fooled by the flattery, but he does agree to answer the question. But first, he reframes the issue subtly by asking to see the coin used to pay the tax. This is a clever move because it allows all onlookers, including the reader, to see for themselves what Jesus already knows: Jesus is the one being put on the spot, but it is his questioners who are more deeply entangled with, and complicit in, the exploitative economics of empire. Jesus' pockets are empty, but his opponents have no trouble supplying a denarius on demand. When they produce the coin of the realm, Jesus puts off his answer another moment to make one more thing clear: "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's'". The consensus at the time seems to have been that Jesus managed to wiggle out of the trap, but it's not clear that anyone yet has figured out precisely what he was getting at. The richness and subtlety of the answer is further enhanced when we remember that Matthew's Jesus has already spoken on the subject of money and divided loyalties: "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (6:24). The issue at stake here is nothing less than idolatry. Furthermore, when we think about Jesus highlighting the physicality of that denarius -- the coin stamped out by human hands for human purposes, and the image of Caesar imprinted on it, it's hard to ignore the connection to those words from the beginning of Genesis about what God said the first time God stamped out a human being: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Confronted with the question of human loyalty and the coin bearing the image of the earthly emperor, it's easy to picture Jesus flipping that coin in his hand a few times, and then tossing it casually aside. In my imagination I see his eyes rising to meet those of his opponents, confronting each of them with an unspoken question hanging in the air: "And you, my friend: Whose image do you bear?" One thing, at least, seems clear: Jesus is not solving the dilemma by carving out separate domains of human loyalty. For every character in the story, and for each of us who still bother to read and ponder it, one absolute commitment subsumes and relativises all other commitments. Whatever we render unto Caesar, or to our savings, or church giving, we can never afford to forget this: we belong entirely to God. We may divide our budget, but we must never divide our allegiance. Our Emperor said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." We must never forget to render unto God the things that are God's.

Questions for Scripture Reflection

1. What is the connection in your life between God's presence and rest, and what do you hope for? (Exodus 33:14)
2. If humans bear the image of their creator, what does this parable teach us about ourselves? (Matthew 22:22)

SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2023 - ORDINARY SUNDAY 30

Readings - Deuteronomy 34.1-12; Psalm 90.1-6, 13-17; 1 Thessalonians 2.1-13; Matthew 22.34-46.

Sentence - You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (*Matthew 22.37-40*)

Prayer of the day - O God, whose Son has taught us that love is the fulfilment of your law: stir up within us the fire of your Holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts your greatest gift of love, so that we may love you with our whole being, and our neighbours as ourselves; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Reflection – In the Gospel passage a legal expert from among the Pharisees asks Jesus one last question in order to test him, "Which commandment in the law is greatest?" Jesus' answer is classic. Loving God is the first thing, the most important thing. But, with it comes a corollary: to love God means that you also love God's people. The ancient rabbis put it in similar terms: "What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour. That is the whole Law." What more can be said after this? The key problem in interpreting this double commandment for our time is that we lose sight of the biblical meaning of love. Our culture has equated love with intense emotion. To love is a stronger response than to like. And, both are measures of a passive response to something outside us. Biblical love is not passive and it is not strictly emotional. In the Old Testament, there are references to many kinds of love, but the love referred to here by Jesus is the love of Deuteronomy 6:5, the love of Yahweh. This love is far from passive. It is the active response of the faithful person to the love of God. God's love is also active. God chooses (elects) to love Israel above all nations and to bring his love through this chosen people. To love God with all one's heart, and soul, and mind, is to choose to respond to God even as God chooses to love us. Feelings and emotions do not enter into the equation. In short, loving is a choice, not a feeling. To love God with all our heart, mind, and soul seems nearly impossible when we think of love as an emotion. How does one conjure up feelings for something as remote, mysterious, and disembodied as the concept of God? We cannot look into God's eyes, wrap our arms around the Spirit, or even see the face of Jesus. If we could, that might evoke in us a profound feeling of love. We might fall in love with Jesus' beauty and grace if we could know him as Mary and Martha did. But, we are commanded to love an intangible God. So how do we touch a God we cannot touch or see? Likewise, loving our neighbour has challenges too. If love is merely our passive response to the person next to us, we are likely to be more often repulsed than moved to love. How can one legitimately look into the face of an enemy and feel unqualified love? It is nearly impossible. But, biblical love is not passive. It is not something that occurs to us without our control or will. Biblical love is something we do. It is loving-kindness, merciful action that is both generous and continuous. Herein is the good news for Christian people. To love neighbour as oneself is to act toward the other as one would act toward those close to you. We treat the stranger as well as we treat those that we love emotionally. When the action to each is equal, the love to each is equal. This is counter to what we expect, but it is in keeping with what the commandment requires. This means that, to those with whom we are intimate, to those we do not know, to those who may be dirty or repugnant, and even to those who harm us, we can act according to the law of love. We can be merciful and gracious. To love the neighbour as ourselves is to make a conscious choice and act upon it. And what about love of God? Again, as God chose Israel and elected to forgive her at every offense, so we can choose God and serve him in every way. We can love with our heart: through generosity to God's people. We can love with our soul: by worshiping God and praying for our neighbours and ourselves. And we can love with our minds: studying God's Word and letting it correct us, enlighten us, and send us out in loving action to the world. See how these commandments are connected, "the greatest commandment" and the "second, which is like it"? When we love God's people, we are always, and at the same time loving God. They are inseparable. Surprisingly, sometimes our emotions follow suit and we actually feel a love of other, or a love of God. But the emotion is not commanded. Only the action of love is commanded. In Christ, this we can do, even when we don't feel like it.

Questions for Scripture Reflection

1. God knew Moses face to face, which implies God saw Moses. When and how do you think God sees you? (Deuteronomy 34:10)
2. In what ways do you perceive God to be your dwelling place, and in what ways would you like to? (Psalm 90: 1)
3. What might be something fresh in these familiar words for you or your congregation today? (Matthew 22:37-40)