

Looking back at lockdown

- Did you feel cut off from community or safely protected during lockdown?
- Have you begun to resume outside activities?
- If you are out and about, what new signs of God at work have you seen?
- Where are you encountering new life?
- Does your community look and feel different now?

Now try answering those questions in relation to the life and worship of the church.

Encountering the new

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. - T. S. Eliot, Little Gidding

- What is your one hope for what God will do through the Church as we re-encounter a wider community?

What if people re-encounter God through a church that begins to live out justice; sharing that the Good News of the Risen Christ is in lifting the fallen, serving the broken, healing the planet?

What if our encounter with God challenges others to re-encounter God's grace because we have stopped talking about faith and begin to impact our community with faith?

Going back the way we came?

Read 1 Kings 19: 1-18

- What stood out to you from this passage?

Elijah ran away but was directed by God to 'go back the way you came'; not to find a new direction for his life, but to recognise God's continuing call despite the past.

Might God be asking each one of us: "what are you doing here?" Might God's still, small voice whisper new possibilities for mission and worship.

'And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire [a sound of gentle stillness and] a still, small voice.' - 1 Kings 19:12 Amplified Bible, classic edition

- What is God calling you and us to in this time of 'gentle stillness'?

Opening our eyes and ears

Part of the Easter season Lectionary readings is that of the couple on the road to Emmaus. As they left Jerusalem they re-encountered Jesus but didn't recognise him. Then, as he broke bread to bless their meal together, Luke tells us: '*their **eyes** were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight*'. - Luke 24: 31

In the Old Testament, Job lives through a time of huge loss but, at the end, meets God who takes him to task for his lack of faith. Job's response is to say: *My **ears** had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.* - Job 42: 5

- What do we need to open our eyes to as our community re-emerges??
- How can we open our ears to hear our community and discover where God is at work, even if we hadn't spotted it before?
- What excites you about what God might be doing that we can be invited to join in?

Where next?

Read Hebrews 10: 23-24

- How can we be people who 'spur one another on toward love and good deeds'?