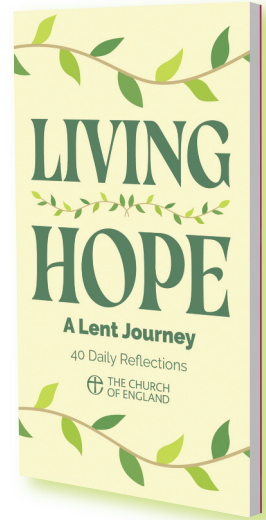




LIVING HOPE

A Lent Journey RESOURCE FOR GROUPS



The Church of England's theme this Lent is Living Hope. In Lent we journey with Jesus on the difficult and thorny road that leads all the way to the cross on Good Friday – and beyond, to the transformation of Easter Day.

God invites us to bring to him our own journey through everyday life. The hope God offers us is not wishful thinking. It is, as the Bible suggests, something alive – real, robust, rooted. In the disappointment of daily setbacks and the pain of deeper hurts, we discover that God is present with us through it all. And God promises a future where all things are healed and made new.

These resources have been produced for groups to use throughout Lent. Their content is based on the *Living Hope* daily reflections available in the Church House Publishing booklet or via the Everyday Faith app. For each week of Lent, there are prompts for reflection, a Bible passage, questions for discussion and suggested music and prayers. If your group is also reading *Wild Bright Hope* (the SPCK Big Church Read Lent Book 2025), some quotations from the book have been included for reflections and discussion.

Our readings and reflections explore how we can have hope in times of frustration or uncertainty; the hope found in joining with others; the invitation to notice signs of hope around us; the courage to face reality and pursue a hopeful future; and how God transforms death into life at Easter.

Our prayer is that these resources support your group in encountering God, the source of our living hope.

You can find links to where to download digital resources and order the *Living Hope* booklets at www.cofe.io/LivingHope

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Weekly videos

Short weekly videos introducing each of the themes above can be streamed via YouTube - or downloaded for offline use from Vimeo:

Click here for YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcc_HT5Teqjo5y_FHrnWasgCAZUDmdrq

Click here for Vimeo

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/11596689?share=copy>

You can also find both links via cofe.io/LivingHope

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Start of Lent – Hope



In a world where it can sometimes feel hard to be optimistic, God offers us something deeper – hope. This Lent is an opportunity to put down deep roots of hope, discovering God's promises for the future and his presence with us now.

Suggested Bible reading: Romans 5.1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Cathrine writes: *'Paul reminds us that endurance produces character, and character produces hope. As we embark on this journey, we are called to 'suit up' and invite the Holy Spirit to guide us. This year our Lenten journey is an invitation to explore hope. It is an uncertain path. Not every day will be the same, it will not always be easy. But even through the wilderness, we can encounter God.'* (p16, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

- How does the idea of hope speak to your life at the moment?
- How would you describe 'hope'? How is it different from optimism?
- The reflection on Ash Wednesday invites us to think about big questions, including what happens when we die. Is this a conversation you would like to have? If not, what makes it a difficult topic to discuss?

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you that, through your presence with us and the future you offer us, you lead us into hope. We offer you our lives as they are, praying that you would be at work within each of us throughout this season of Lent. Amen.

Suggested music:

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past (Isaac Watts) or *Great is Thy Faithfulness* (Thomas Chisolm)



Week One – Imperfect



Our lives are complex and we live in an imperfect world. Our daily frustrations and limitations are no surprise to God and he can fill us with hope through these very situations.





Suggested Bible reading: Romans 7.15-19, 24-25

'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.'

Cathrine writes: *'The more we try to save ourselves by our own strength and wisdom, the more hopeless our situation becomes. Paul came to realize that perfection is not the goal. He does not have to be flawless, because Jesus Christ is perfect, and God can work through our imperfections. The point is to bring everything to our loving God.'* (p25, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

-  What struck you from the reflections you read over the past week?
-  Did you try any of the challenges? If you did, is there anything you noticed?
-  What are some of the limitations and frustrations you encounter in your everyday life?
-  How does God offer hope in those situations?

For reflection/discussion by those also reading *Wild Bright Hope*:

‘Through Christ, we envision a brighter future where people from every nation, tribe, and tongue unite. Hope fuels our deepest aspirations and drives us towards a world transformed by faith, love, and reconciliation, where unity and understanding prevail.’ *Alysia-Lara Ayonrinde* (p17-18)

‘Hope in the Christian sense is not the same as optimism, the belief that, having assessed the evidence, a positive change is coming. Rather, hope is the certain assurance that God is faithful to his promises and will deliver for his people, even when, outwardly, there is no evidence that anything is going to change for the better. Our hope enables us to persevere as we remember that God – mysteriously, wonderfully, unstopably – is in the process of transforming the world.’
Will Fremont-Brown (p27)

Closing prayer

Dear God, you know us and our lives completely. Where we find ourselves frustrated or disheartened, help us to turn to you and find hope. Amen.

Suggested music:

Amazing Grace (John Newton)
or *I Need Thee Every Hour*
(Annie S. Hawks)



Week Two – Trusting








In this second week of Lent, we're going to think through how much trust it takes to have hope. How can we have hope, even when it's tough? Even when we can't make sense of what God is up to?

Suggested Bible reading: John 11.17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

Belle writes: *'Hope can sit alongside feelings of despair, confusion and desperation. And, what's more, you can take all of those feelings to God at the very same time. Hope doesn't require you to pretend you're not hurting. Brutal honesty with God is the sign of a fighting hope, not a fading one.'* (p38, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

-  What struck you from the reflections you read over the past week?
-  Did you try any of the challenges? If you did, is there anything you noticed?
-  In what situations do you find it hard to trust God? Where is hope hard to find?
-  What do you make of the idea that hope can sit alongside confusion and desperation?
-  How do you feel about expressing uncomfortable emotions to God?

For reflection/discussion by those also reading *Wild Bright Hope*:

‘Christian hope is not just the redemption of brokenness, it is redemption *through brokenness*. Christ’s body was broken for us, and it is through that brokenness that we are redeemed. When he appeared to the apostles, Christ retained the holes in his hands and the piercing in his side. The scars that remain by painful repair are the perpetual testimony that wounds can heal!’
Cameron Howe (p53)

‘Hope does not guarantee a particular outcome. Nor does it somehow enable us to endure, unfeeling, until Jesus returns. Instead, hope in a future secure with God gives us a different perspective on the present.’ Martha Jarvis (p63)

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you that we can trust you completely. Where we struggle to find hope, help us to have confidence that you are at work. Amen.

Suggested music:

It is well with my soul (Horatio Spafford) or *O Lord Hear My Prayer* (Taizé)



Week Three – Together



We are designed for community – to build one another up and to allow ourselves to be built up by others. In this way, God enables us to remain rooted in hope and to become a hopeful presence in our communities.

Suggested Bible reading: Matthew 5.13-16

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Cathrine writes: '*When we allow Jesus, the light of the world, to shine through us, we can bring hope to our communities, showing a different way is possible. And, through this, others may discover Jesus – the source of our light and hope.*' (p53, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

- What struck you from the reflections you read over the past week?
- Did you try any of the challenges? If you did, is there anything you noticed?
- In what ways does reaching out to others enable us to become more hopeful?
- What opportunities do we have as a group or a church to bring hope to our community?

For reflection/discussion by those also reading *Wild Bright Hope*:

'Hope often thrives in uncertainty. It requires faith rather than mere optimism. It acknowledges our lack of complete understanding, but assures us that even the limited knowledge we have can sustain our hope and trust in God.' *Cathrine Fungai* (p85)

God is sovereign over all – over our times, our nation, our politics. Regardless of what comes our way in the years ahead, and even if it is more shaking, God is our sure foundation. We can always look to him and have great hope.' *Keziah Patterson* (p102)

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you that you invite your church to be part of the hope you bring to the world. Where we find ourselves in need of hope, help us to reach out to others. And please show us how we can be hope-bearers in our families, workplaces and communities. Amen.

Suggested music:

Jesus Stand Among Us (Graham Kendrick) or
The Church's One Foundation (S. J. Stone)

Week Four – Noticing







As we move into the fourth week of Lent, we are tasking ourselves with the art of noticing. Noticing what God is doing in our lives, our communities, our world.

Suggested Bible reading: Genesis 28.10-17

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

Belle writes: *'It's possible to miss God. It's possible for him to have been up to something, right before our eyes, and we didn't spot it. How interesting is that? God is always doing things that we can't see but it's worth remembering that sometimes he gives us glimpses. However, noticing them isn't inevitable.'* (p58, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

-  What struck you from the reflections you read over the past week?
-  Did you try any of the challenges? If you did, is there anything you noticed?
-  Do you expect to see God at work in your life and in the world around you?
-  How can we become more aware of what God is doing?

For reflection/discussion by those also reading *Wild Bright Hope*:

‘Hope starts by living it, in whichever context and daily life is ours. Then, in humility and assurance, we can offer them as gifts to the world.’ Hannah Spiers (p122)

‘Our great and gracious God is up to something beautiful in this cultural moment, I’m certain of it. The evidence is all over the place.’ Belle Tindall (p131)

Closing prayer

Dear God, we praise you that you are at work to renew and heal all things. Help us to be more attentive to the ways you are working in our own lives and the lives of those around us. Lead us deeper into hope as we become aware of your presence. Amen.

Suggested music:

Open Our Eyes, Lord (We Want to See Jesus) (Robert Cull) or *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Folliott Sandford Pierpoint)



Week Five – Courage







When we know that we can trust God and put our hope in him, this can give us the courage to seek change where it is needed. Rooted in the hopeful future God offers us, we dare to reimagine the present.

Suggested Bible reading: Luke 9.23-27

Then he said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'

Victoria writes: *'This is a pretty stark invitation! Why would anyone say yes to it? Why would we choose the suffering and pain that Jesus endured? The only answer is Jesus himself. We find full and lasting hope only in Jesus. So we want to be where he is. And that means allowing our lives to be transformed by him, going to the hurting places where he goes, having the courage to risk the costs involved.'* (p81, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

-  What struck you from the reflections you read over the past week?
-  Did you try any of the challenges? If you did, is there anything you noticed?
-  Can you think of any situations where acting for hope requires courage?
-  Are there ways in which you feel invited to take a courageous step?

For reflection/discussion by those also reading *Wild Bright Hope*:

‘Making time for God, sitting quietly in a church or the sacred spaces we make in our homes, may seem like a simple act. But it is, in truth, a radical one. When we pray, we are not only seeking comfort; we are engaging in an act of defiance against despair. Prayer becomes a bold declaration that the world and its people are worth saving, that our lives have meaning to the one who holds all things.’ Toby Thomas (p152)

‘There is hope to be found in the willingness of young global majority people to engage in reflective and analytical work, as they hold in tension the evil of historical wrongdoings and the goodness and fruitfulness of the Christian faith. It is work to which we are all called.’ Goodness Victor (p160)

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you that you care about injustice and brokenness. Please give us the courage to advocate for hope even where that is costly. Show us the cross you are calling us to pick up today. Amen.

Suggested music:

The Kingdom of God
(Taizé) or *Restore O Lord* (Graham Kendrick)



Holy Week – Transformed



We've arrived at Holy Week. The week we dread, the week we long to reach. The week that holds both tragedy and triumph. As we spend each day together, inching our way toward the cross, we'll be focusing on the theme of 'Transformed'.






Suggested Bible reading: John 16.7-13

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Belle writes: *'Jesus knows that this week is going to be incredibly tough, not only for him, but the people who have been with him. It's about to be confusing, disorienting and incredibly painful. Perhaps that is why he chooses this moment to talk about the arrival of the 'Advocate' – the one we more often call the Holy Spirit – who would come at Pentecost... Many lies were about to be told about Jesus, lies which would lead to his execution. So, it's like Jesus is promising – someone is going to come and tell you the truth about me. It may not look like it, but the truth will win.'* (p84, *Living Hope*)

Questions for discussion

-  What struck you from the reflections you read over the past week?
-  Did you try any of the challenges? If you did, is there anything you noticed?
-  Why do you think Jesus talks to his disciples about the promise of the Holy Spirit in the days immediately before his death?
-  What is your experience of the Holy Spirit?
-  How might the Holy Spirit help us remain filled with hope?

For reflection/discussion by those also reading *Wild Bright Hope*:

‘Our hope is in the same Spirit that hovered over the chaos in Genesis; the same Spirit that creates billions of universes; the same Spirit who breathes and gives life; the same Spirit who, through Mary, lifts the lowly high; the same Spirit that Jesus gave up on the cross for us; the same Spirit that overflowed on Pentecost. And this Spirit lives and breathes in you and me. The breath in our lungs is the breath of God, and it’s through the slow and silent work of the Holy Spirit that we grow.’ Bhanuka Warnasooriya (p179)

‘But the Christian hope is not a naïve hope. It doesn’t grow in a greenhouse, sheltered from the painful realities of life. The Christian hope is a wild evergreen hope that can’t help but grow in our lives when Jesus is present, even in the craters and tombs.’ Rachael Woodridge (p194)

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you for the outpouring of love we see in Jesus’ cross and resurrection. In this most transformative of all weeks, help us to discover afresh the life-changing hope of Good Friday and Easter. Amen.

Suggested music:

(Jesus, keep me) Near the Cross (Fanny Crosby) or
My Song is Love Unknown
(Samuel Crossman)

