



The way forward: A time to reflect

As the lockdown begins to ease and we cautiously return to a life without the restrictions of the past year this also gives us opportunities to prepare for the first steps of being an in-person gathered church community again. We have travelled a long and hard road through the pandemic, and it is clear that this journey is not over for all. We will have no doubt experienced much, both helpful and challenging, so it is wise to take time and reflect on these experiences. This new season has afforded us a great opportunity to begin again - starting from scratch - so what can we dream? What is God saying to us about the ministry and mission of GBC? What can we, what should we, do differently?

This is the final of our 4 'way forward' reflections, each following a Sunday online message. We trust the first 3 have been helpful and given you opportunity to stop, listen and pray. A number of people have already completed their reflections, either as small groups or individually, and returned them, which is much appreciated. If you haven't done so yet, we want to encourage you to take some time to participate and share what you discover. If you would value a conversation about your reflection Gill or Micky would be delighted to hear from you.

WEEK four

Picture four – THE HEART OF FLESH

This image is nestled in one of the most powerful and encouraging chapters of the Old Testament. The prophets often spoke of the times when God would draw the Israelites back to himself for a season of prosperity and devotion, usually under a faithful leader, only to have them rebel and worship idols again. But these verses in Ezekiel 36 - the whole chapter, really - speaks to something more permanent. God promises to move in his people, cleansing them from sin and moving them to follow him in ways that in the past they seemed unable to do.

Change - positive change in the lives of human beings - is possible, more than possible.
How does it come about?

Read: Ezekiel 36:22-27

Study & reflection

- Q. What is one observation (not interpretation or application yet) you notice when reading this passage? For instance, do you notice any key words, repetition, connecting thoughts, mentions of God, or important themes?

Q. The apostle Paul says this in Romans 5:5: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Do you think you have experienced this? If so, how?

Q. What does the image of the heart of flesh mean for you?

Q. What are the characteristics of a 'soft-hearted' church?

Q. How can we nurture this characteristic in our church?

It would seem anxiety and trauma are constants in the lives of human beings, but sadly as a consequence of the last 15-months this is being experienced by more, and in a deeper way.

Q. As a church what can we do to reach out to the hurting and broken in our community?

Prayer *Move among us, Spirit, and gather us together with you.
Take our many selves - our lives, our loves, our ideas,
our questions, our speech, our silence and unite us as your people.
Give us the gifts of perception and understanding,
so that even as we dream your dreams and see your visions,
we may be able to witness to your presence
in our common life. Amen.*