



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

Living Faith in Suffolk



Living Isaiah

Images

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Living Isaiah is one of the Living Faith in Suffolk resources produced by the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and available on www.cofesuffolk.org

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Introduction

Living Isaiah is a Living Faith in Suffolk course intended to enable exploration of some of the key themes in the book of Isaiah. The following themes are covered:

- Isaiah: An Introduction (page 4)
- Idols and Injustice (page 7)
- Imagery (page 10)
- Isaiah Apocalypse (page 13)
- Servant Songs (page 16)
- Holiness (page 19)

The course can be used by individuals or by groups; if you are using it in a group setting then please see the information below.

For facilitators

- The material provided here should be used flexibly to suit the needs of your group. The central element of each session is the Bible reading with the related questions underneath, enabling people to reflect on the passage and make decisions about its application. The additional material in boxes can be used as much or as little as is appropriate to your setting. It may provide useful background information for you as facilitator or further reading for those who wish to go deeper after each session. Some or all of it could be used to inform the discussion of the central questions or as additional discussion points. The important thing to remember is that there is no need to try to cover everything.
- The session opens by reading the Bible passage[s] given. When meeting as a group there are a number of different ways of reading a Bible passage:
 - read it more than once, from different versions of the Bible as used by different members of the group
 - allow everyone in the group to take a turn at reading, each reading just one sentence before the next person takes over
 - read slowly and meditatively
 - read imaginatively; that is, allowing people to enter into the story in their imagination, to picture themselves present at the scene (either as themselves or by identifying with a character)
 - read the passage and then allow a time of silence during which people can reflect, before reading the passage for a second time.

Session 1:

Isaiah: an introduction

Read: Isaiah 6:1-8

- As you read this passage, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?
- What might it have been like, for Isaiah, to have such an experience?
- Isaiah's experience draws his attention to his own unworthiness (verse 5) and to God's resolution of this (verse 7): what makes you aware of God's holiness and your lack of holiness in comparison, and how might you respond?

Read: Isaiah 6:9-13

- As you read this passage, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?
- God's message through Isaiah describes the current problem with his people, and pronounces judgement on them, before giving a note of hope at the end of verse 13. How would you explain the message in these verses? What might they have to say to us today?

WHO WAS ISAIAH?

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem in the second half of the 8th century BC, during the reigns of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He was the son of Amoz who, according to Jewish tradition, was the brother of an earlier king. Isaiah was counsellor to the king (see 37:1-7), was married to a prophetess (see 8:3) and legend has it that he was martyred.

Although the book of Isaiah is included in the Bible as a single book, chapters 40-66 refer to historical events considerably later than those of the first part of the book as they are written to the Jews exiled in Babylon. These later chapters are written in a similar style to the earlier ones and are thought to have been written by an unknown disciple of Isaiah's, referred to as 'Second' or 'Deutero' Isaiah. It is possible that chapters 56-66 are written by a third author, rather than Second Isaiah writing at a later time and in a different location.

- How important is it to be aware of the discoveries of later scholarship, such as the information about the authorship of Isaiah?

ISAIAH – THE FIFTH GOSPEL

The book of Isaiah had an enormous influence on the writers of the New Testament, as it looks forward not only to the imminent redemption from exile but also the coming of the Servant King and, in the future, the final redemption of all – Israel and 'the nations' (the rest of humanity) – in the new heaven and new earth. With such a message of hope, and with the many passages seen as pointing directly to the coming of Jesus as Messiah, the book is sometimes known as the 'Fifth Gospel' ('Gospel' means 'good news').

- How might this make a difference to the way we read Isaiah?

ISAIAH THE PROPHET

People learn and communicate in diverse ways, and the prophets were no different. They gave their message in different ways: poetry and song (e.g. Isaiah 44:21 onwards); oracles (e.g. Isaiah 3:13-26) using imagery, announcing disaster or giving promises; and enacting their message (e.g. Isaiah 20). Like other prophets (e.g. Hosea), the names given by Isaiah to his children form part of his prophetic message (see chapters 7 and 8).

Chapter 6 recounts Isaiah's call to prophecy, by way of a vision which leads to his cleansing and his commission to announce God's judgement on people who, in their idol-worship, are becoming like these idols.

- How do you think people today would respond to these different methods? Which method would most suit you?

HOW CAN WE READ ISAIAH TODAY?

Reading the prophets enables us to hear what God was saying to the people of Israel at different points in their history, and to see how foretold blessings and curses were fulfilled. Because they are therefore not primarily foretelling our future, they need to be read in the context of their place in the big story. We can then draw out the underlying principles that can speak to us.

Underpinning all Jewish prophecy is the desire for Israel to continue with their side of the covenant with God, reflecting his character and walking in his ways.

Isaiah (1-39) (and Micah) prophesied in the southern kingdom in the 8th century BC. The cities were prosperous but the poor were oppressed. The country and its faithless king were under threat from Assyria, leading to proposed alliances with Syria and Damascus. King Uzziah reigned from 792-740BC and Isaiah's call to prophecy (Isaiah 6) came during the last year of this reign when, after many years of peace, the political situation was becoming volatile.

Isaiah (40-55) (and Ezekiel 1-24) attempted to renew people's faith after they had lost their land, king and temple when the land was conquered and they were taken into exile.

As people returned from exile to their homeland, rebuilt their homes and the temple and returned to temple worship, **Isaiah (56-66)** (and Ezekiel 33-48, Haggai, Joel, Malachi, Daniel, Zechariah and Obadiah) pointed people back to God, to correct worship and to the future Day of the Lord.

- Why is it important to understand the context(s) in which the prophecies are written?

WHAT IS PROPHECY?

The primary function of the prophets was to communicate between God and the people, conveying God's will about national and domestic matters, addressing and making sense of crises, and outlining judgement and necessary change. They addressed specific situations, usually in a time of significant political, military, economic and/or social upheaval, which was seen as being related to the people's disregard for their covenant with God. Although they did announce the future, this was largely the immediate future – much of which has therefore been fulfilled – rather than our future.

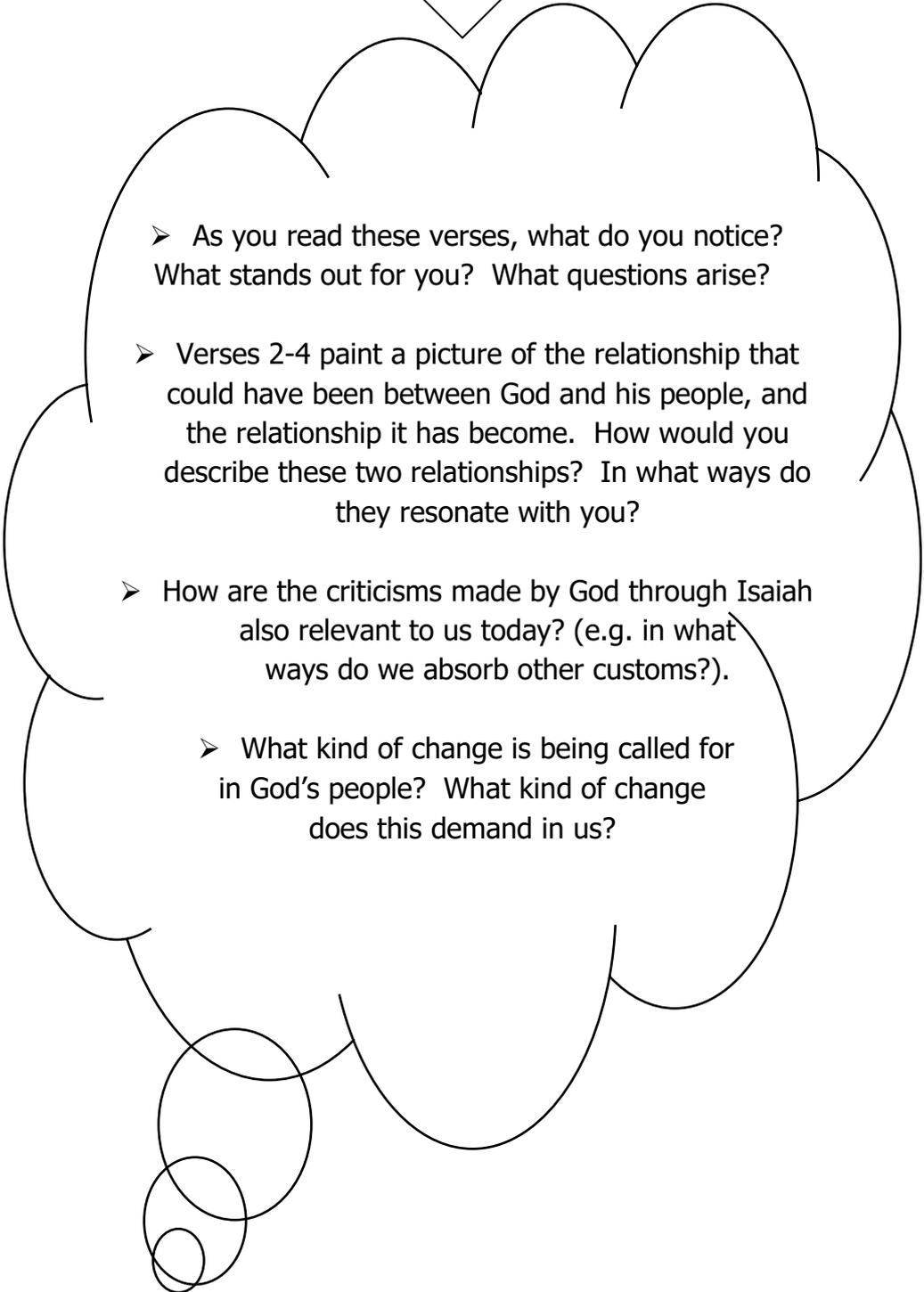
Prophets existed not only in Judaism but also in the surrounding cultures and religions. Many early prophets lived in (sometimes nomadic) communities of prophets and their families. Many served alongside the priests, being regarded as experts in prayer, interpreting the meaning of events and communicating between God and the people. Over time there became a separation between priests and prophets as the prophets increasingly spoke out against misguided religious practices or over-reliance on religious performance at the expense of justice.

- Who are the prophets in today's world?

Session 2

Idols and injustice

Read: Isaiah 1:1-4, 7-11,
15-17, 24-27, 2:5-11

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- As you read these verses, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?
 - Verses 2-4 paint a picture of the relationship that could have been between God and his people, and the relationship it has become. How would you describe these two relationships? In what ways do they resonate with you?
 - How are the criticisms made by God through Isaiah also relevant to us today? (e.g. in what ways do we absorb other customs?).
 - What kind of change is being called for in God's people? What kind of change does this demand in us?

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of Isaiah's time of prophecy Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern (known as 'Israel' or Ephraim') and the smaller southern (known as 'Judah'). Isaiah lived in Judah. After a time of peace, Assyria (to the northeast) was growing stronger, trying to become a greater empire. In addition, other countries (such as Israel and Aram – Syria – to the north and Edom to the south) were attacking Judah. You can read about this in 2 Kings 16. King Ahaz of Judah asked Assyria for an alliance, as protection against the other invading countries; but this led to aspects of Assyrian worship being introduced into the temple. Later King Hezekiah of Judah joined forces with other small countries in opposition to Assyria.

Isaiah speaks God's concern at the making of allies with other nations rather than relying on God to defend them. He challenges the way in which the covenant with God has been broken by the introduction of non-Jewish religious practices; and he criticises the lack of social justice that has resulted from this.

- Why might Judah have wanted to make allies with other nations? Why was this a threat to the faith? How could this threat have been addressed?

ISAIAH CHAPTERS 1-2

These chapters give an overview of much of Isaiah's message. In them Isaiah sets out the problem that God is addressing with his people: the people have turned away from God, their towns have been destroyed in war, they have allied with other nations and taken on foreign customs and culture, they have behaved immorally, and so God does not welcome their continued religious practices but wants them to turn back to him. What is required is a genuine change of heart and behaviour, not a continuation of rituals which without that change become meaningless.

- In what ways does it make a difference to this passage when it is read knowing this context?

GOD'S COVENANT

A covenant is a binding contract between two parties which has obligations on either side. In Old Testament times these were often between someone powerful and their subordinate. The powerful party guaranteed benefits and protection in return for the subordinate's loyalty which was demonstrated by their keeping of specified rules.

The Old Testament laws form the rules to be kept by Israel as their side of their covenant with God, living in a way which reflects his character, in return for which they would be God's people – see Exodus 19:5-6.

- How might it feel to be part of such a covenant relationship? To what extent do you see yourself as part of a covenant people?

WHO IS THIS GOD?

It was not uncommon at the time of Isaiah for people to worship local gods: the Assyrians had their own gods, as did the Egyptians etc. The Jewish God, however – worshipped by Israel, Judah, and us! – was seen not as a local god but as the creator and sustainer of the universe. Although Israel and Judah are God's chosen people, rescued from slavery and set free to be God's people (see Exodus 19-24), God's covenant with Abram (later Abraham) includes the promise of blessing to all people on earth (Genesis 12:3). God is the King in heaven (see Isaiah 6:5); he is the righteous judge (Psalm 7:11) and he is also the God of love – see, for example, the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, which is a song of God's love for his people.

- How does the Song of the Vineyard convey God's love for his people?
- What does this song tell you about the relationship between God and his people? How do you respond to this?

Session 3

Imagery

Read: Isaiah 11:1-10

➤ Before you read the above passage, look at the picture of the Jesse Tree by Nicholas Papas. What do you notice?

➤ As you read this passage, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?

Jesse was the father of (King) David who, as a shepherd boy, was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be a future king of Israel (you can read the story in 1 Samuel 16). The 'shoot' is understood as referring the Messiah who will come in the future, hence the genealogy tracing Jesus back to Jesse and David in Matthew 1:1-17.

➤ Why might it be important to look back in these ways, both at genealogy and at the prophets?

➤ How could we ensure that we look back and remember? (some families and churches produce a 'Jesse Tree' each Advent, which is a tree – Christmas tree or poster version – decorated with symbols of the prophets and of the prophecies about Jesus – might the concept be useful?)

Read: Isaiah 5:1-7

- As you read this passage, what do you notice?
What stands out for you? What questions arise?

People would be familiar with the image of a vineyard as representing the girl whom the writer loves. Here the beloved is not a girl, but God's people. Psalm 80:8-19 and Luke 20:9-19 also use the imagery of the vineyard and John 15:1-6 extends this by considering Jesus as the vine. In this passage we have the story of a lover who has worked hard to cultivate his relationship with his beloved, but the love has not been returned.

- What does this image tell you about the way God thinks of his people and the relationship he desires to have with them (us)? How does this compare to the way you understand relationship with God?
- How might you respond to this image?

IMAGERY IN ISAIAH – INTRODUCTION

The book of Isaiah makes wide use of imagery, partly because of the poetic way in which much of it is written. Some of these images will be familiar to us from their use in:

- the New Testament (e.g. the cornerstone in Isaiah 28:16, used by Paul in Ephesians 2:19-20 and by Peter in 1 Peter 2:4-10)
- in hymns and contemporary songs (e.g. the 18th century hymn 'How firm a foundation' based on Isaiah 43:1-5, and the 20th century song 'I will change your name')
- in art and in music (e.g. paintings of the Jesse tree, and the heavy use of texts from Isaiah in Handel's 'Messiah')

IMAGES IN ISAIAH

There are many, many images used in the book of Isaiah; here are some of them:

- The potter and the clay (29:16, 45:9 and 64:8, also used by Jeremiah 18;1-6)
- Eagles' wings (Isaiah 40:28-31)
- The significance of names, and being given a new name (Isaiah 62:1-12)
- The wolf and the lamb (Isaiah 11:6 and 65:25)
- Sins like scarlet becoming like snow (Isaiah 1:18)
- Purification (Isaiah 6:6-7)

➤ How familiar are these images to you? What do you understand by them?

ISAIAH IN HANDEL'S MESSIAH

In writing the 'Messiah' Handel uses 17 passages from Isaiah, as well as texts from other prophets and from the New Testament. Handel was said to have been so overcome by the power of the biblical texts that he worked solidly for twenty-four days in order to produce this work.

It begins with a passage of comfort from Isaiah 40:1-3, addressed to the Jewish people in exile in Babylon. It then takes people through other passages of hope, prophecies of the coming Messiah and the saving nature of his suffering.

- Why do you think Handel was so inspired by the passages he read in Isaiah? You might like to listen to the 'Comfort Ye' recitative while you think about this.

Session 4

Isaiah Apocalypse

Read: Isaiah 27

- As you read this passage, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?
- There are images here of hope and of judgement. How do you respond to each of these?
 - How do you understand this passage as a 'now-but-not-yet' prophecy?
- What might this passage have to say to us? How might you be different in the light of this?

ISAIAH 24-27

These chapters form the 'Isaiah Apocalypse', containing as they do some apocalyptic language and imagery. While the preceding chapters have foretold the judgement of Israel and the surrounding nations, these chapters foretell judgement on the earth, as God establishes justice and righteousness in the whole world. The earth is portrayed as desolate (24:1, 4-6, 12-13, 19-20); the sun and moon are eclipsed (24:23); the eschatological [end-times] banquet is pictured (25:6); the dead are raised (25:8, 26:19); God has ultimate victory over the host of heaven (24:21) and over Leviathan / the dragon (representing Satan) (27:1). After this has taken place the image of the vineyard, from 5:1-7, is revisited. This time the vineyard is not unfruitful but is responsive – that is, God's love is returned.

- What impact do you think it has on the book of Isaiah as a whole to include some apocalyptic literature?

WHAT IS APOCALYPTIC?

Apocalyptic literature was not common in Isaiah's time. Although it has its roots in the writings for the prophets and in the wisdom texts, it flourished later on when prophecy had died down. There are apocalyptic elements in some of the prophetic writings (such as Daniel chapters 7-12) and in the gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and elements of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 and Luke 11). The book of Revelation is an apocalyptic letter.

The term 'apocalyptic' refers to the revealing of something which was previously hidden. The writings encourage a particular way of interpreting the world, aiming to look at events from the perspective of God and of the end of history, demonstrating how what happens in heaven and what happens on earth are connected, with each side affecting the other, as history moves towards a climax in which God's enemies – cosmic as well as earthly – are defeated. Because of this they encourage us to think more deeply about the impact of our actions and inactions. In times of difficulty the writings offered hope that ultimately God will intervene and create all things anew.

Apocalyptic writings are often given as visions and are full of symbolism, including fantasy creatures. Colours, numbers and creatures are symbolic, with some being easy to decode and some being more obscure.

- What do you understand by the idea that what happens in heaven corresponds to what happens on earth? How could this give encouragement and hope?

THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Isaiah chapters 13-23 consist of a number of oracles about the surrounding nations – Babylon, Assyria, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia and Egypt – as well as Judah. The chapters speak of the judgement of these nations, describing the reasons (for example, arrogance, oppression, bloodshed) and the nature of the judgement (destruction, suffering, fighting). Alongside this will be restoration for some: Judah (14:1-2), and Egypt, Assyria and Israel (19:18-25) as they turn back to God.

- To what extent do you think we still (as a nation) receive judgement for turning away from God? Or will this be a future judgement?

COVENANT

Chapter 24 describes how God's covenant has been broken. A covenant is a binding contract between two parties which has obligations on either side. The Old Testament laws form the rules to be kept by Israel as their side of their covenant with God, in return for which they would be God's people – see Exodus 19:5-6. However, these verses in Isaiah presuppose knowledge of the covenant outside of Israel. We are created with an awareness of right and wrong – of the need to behave as if God and God's expectations do exist. Therefore the judgement – and the restoration – applies not only to Israel but also to the rest of the world.

This fits well with the New Testament perspective on covenant: Jesus was clear that his intention was not to do away with God's covenant, but to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17). Jesus saw this in terms of love for God, neighbour and enemy. Instead of law-keeping as the way of demonstrating loyalty to God, what is necessary is belief in Jesus (John 3:16-17).

- To what extent do you think the world is aware of God's expectations of us?

Session 5

Servant Songs

Read: Isaiah 42:1-4;
49:1-6; 50:4-9

- As you read these passages, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?
- Taking these three passages together, what picture is painted of the 'Servant'? What are his characteristics? What roles does he have? In what ways might these have met the needs of the time? In what ways could someone like this meet today's needs?
- What do you see in these passages of the commitment of the 'Servant' to his master?
 - Which parts of the description of the 'Servant' most speak to you? Which appeal to you, which challenge you?
- If you had been among the first hearers of these songs, what might have been your response? How might you respond to them now?

BACKGROUND

The Servant Songs come into the part of Isaiah known as Deutero-Isaiah, or Second Isaiah – that is, the part that was written later and by an unknown author. They date from the period in the sixth century BC when the Israelites (or at least, the social and political elite) were in exile in Babylon. During this time they were able to maintain a little autonomy over their religious practices. They were dissatisfied at God, seeing their exile as a sign of God's neglect of them and sceptical about his control over political events. Deutero-Isaiah points them towards an ending of this exile, creating the expectation of a new Exodus.

In 547 BC Cyrus, King of Persia, was gaining power, and it was becoming apparent that Babylon's rule was reaching an end. In 539 BC Babylon surrendered to Cyrus and, in 538 BC, Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and restore the Temple. It is likely that Deutero-Isaiah was writing during the period 547-539 BC, hence the references to Cyrus in chapters 44 and 45.

- What might have been the feelings and the religious and political climate around at the time amongst the Israelites hoping for another Exodus?

THE SUFFERING SERVANT (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

Some of the imagery in the Servant Songs – that which is most associated with Jesus – is focused around suffering. It draws on traditional ideas about the scapegoat, a ceremony used during the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16:21-22). The 'Servant' is the champion of justice and righteousness. Whilst suffering and ignored by contemporaries, in the future the 'Servant' will be recognised as God's servant and will fulfil the mission to restore justice to the world. In this imagery there is an emphasis on transformation, from humiliation to exaltation, from defeat to victory.

- Read the 'Suffering Servant' song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). How much of this do you recognise as being used by the New Testament writers to refer to Jesus? How much of it do you think fits with the story of Jesus as presented to us in the gospels?
- If this passage does refer to Jesus, what reasons does it give for Jesus' suffering and death – how is it suggesting that his suffering and death benefits others?

THE SERVANT SONGS

These are probably the most well-known part of the book of Isaiah. They are placed in the context of the prophet making his case that God is to be trusted as rescuer of those in exile, and persuading people that salvation has now come. They introduce the idea of a 'salvation figure', someone who will come from God to rescue them from their current situation: an idea which, by the time of the New Testament writers, had become prominent.

WHO WAS/IS THE 'SERVANT'?

The short answer is that nobody knows. Christianity has seen the Servant Songs as predicting a Messianic figure – fulfilled by Jesus – and certainly the New Testament writers drew on these songs in their writings about Jesus. But, as with all prophecy, the songs must have had some immediate significance for the writer's contemporaries, and this has led to much discussion about who the 'Servant', at the time of Deutero-Isaiah, could be.

The nation of Israel was often referred to as God's servant: at that time, those who worshipped a particular god were referred to as that god's 'servants'. Although the Servant Songs do seem to be talking about an individual, one poetic device used by the prophets is personification and it is possible that this is being used here with Israel being represented as an individual who acts, speaks, suffers and is addressed by God.

The Old Testament uses the term 'servant' for some of the faith's key figures such as Abraham, Moses and David. It also uses the term to refer to the prophets. One school of thought is that the 'Servant' was Deutero-Isaiah himself.

Some references to the 'Servant' indicate royalty. Given the role of Cyrus in Jewish history around this time (see 'Background' box) some have suggested that these passages could be pointing to the role Cyrus will have in setting the Israelites free from exile, just as Moses set them free from slavery in Egypt.

- How do you react to the idea of the 'Servant' being Deutero-Isaiah, one of his contemporaries, Cyrus, or a personification of Israel? How does this affect your understanding of the Servant Songs as referring to Jesus?

Session 6

Holiness

Read: Isaiah 40:12-26

- As you read this passage, what do you notice? What stands out for you? What questions arise?
- What picture of God is painted in this reading? There are a lot of images here; try to build up a detailed picture from these images. How does this compare to the way you usually think of God?
 - How might this picture of God differ from common perceptions of God – inside and outside the church? What could we do to present this picture of God to others?
 - What might you do differently as a result of today's reflections?

ISAIAH 40

Isaiah 40 marks the beginning of the section by 'Deutero-Isaiah' or 'Second Isaiah'. The people of God are in exile and dissatisfied at God; they are here being pointed back to the God they have worshipped in the past. The early verses of this chapter speak comfort to the people, preparing them for a return from exile, reminding them of their lack of trust and of God's faithfulness. The verses in today's reading speak of the character of this faithful, holy God.

WHAT IS HOLINESS?

Holiness, for Isaiah, has two characteristics. It speaks of God's 'otherness' as creator and sustainer of all; a God with no rivals because all the contemporary gods were lifeless idols – Isaiah is clear that there is only one God. It speaks also of God's moral/ethical sense, characterised by justice, righteousness, love, compassion, goodness and faithfulness. This is a moral/ethical sense applying not just to God but also to God's people: being God's holy people entails bearing God's likeness – becoming holy as God is holy.

This theme of becoming holy underlies the shaping of the people of God in the Old Testament through, for example, the laws set out in Leviticus – 'For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy' (Leviticus 11:44). This theme is then taken up in the New Testament, which describes the Church as called and chosen to be holy (Ephesians 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1); to be distinct from the rest of the world, imitating God (Ephesians 5:1) and called to be saints (1 Corinthians 1:2) – 'holy ones'.

- In what ways can we 'be holy'?

GOD AS 'OTHER'

The description of God as the 'Holy One of Israel' comes frequently throughout the book of Isaiah. To speak of God as 'holy' is to speak of God as 'wholly other' (see for example Exodus 15:11, from Israel's earliest hymn), separate from the ordinary. It speaks of his absolute power and absolute purity, shown in his love for his creation and his grace in transforming that creation. It speaks of God being so utterly different from his creation that he is unimaginable; he is like nothing (no thing) in the created world. It is worth spending time with the sense of awe and wonder which comes from reflecting on God in this way.

- How does this description of God compare to the way(s) in which you usually think of him (or her)?

ISRAEL – GOD’S HOLY PEOPLE

God’s chosen people were given the name ‘Israel’ after Jacob (of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) who was given the new name Israel after the night when he wrestled with God (see Genesis 32:22-32). After the nation split into two, the northern kingdom retained the name Israel while the southern kingdom was known as Judah.

Although the whole of the book of Isaiah is written to the southern kingdom, Isaiah always refers to God’s people as ‘Israel’. For him ‘Israel’ is ‘the people of God’, a group of people defined by its relationship with God and answerable to God, rather than defined by national boundaries or ethnicity. For Isaiah, God’s holy people Israel includes Gentiles (non- Jews) – ‘the nations’ referred to throughout the book. They are a people who are stubborn and wayward, but loved and redeemed. They are called to live out their status as ‘holy people’.

- How can a nation, or group of people, be holy? What lessons might this have for us?

ZION – GOD’S HOLY CITY OR MOUNTAIN

In the Bible ‘Zion’ is commonly used to refer to Jerusalem, God’s holy city; sometimes there is reference to ‘Mount Zion’ which was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The New Testament uses the term to refer to a future, heavenly Jerusalem (e.g. Revelation 14:1) and there are glimpses of this in Isaiah – see, for example, Isaiah 60:14. Today ‘Zion’ is used to refer either to the Western Hill outside Jerusalem, or to the entire country of Israel-Palestine.

- What might it mean to describe a city as ‘holy’?

