

Week six  
Transforming  
Faith

# Transforming Life

## a Lent Course for 2012

produced by the Diocese of St Albans

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### The Bible Reading

Lent 6

**Isaiah 4-9a**

<sup>4</sup> The Lord God has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he awakens—  
awakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord God has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backwards.

<sup>6</sup> I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord God helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

<sup>8</sup> he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?

Let them confront me.

<sup>9</sup> It is the Lord God who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?

All of them will wear out like a garment;  
the moth will eat them up.

*You may prefer to save paper by only reproducing pages 2 & 3 and using bibles to read the passage.*

### Isaiah 50.4-9a

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### Some Reflections

Isaiah 50 deals with some of the most difficult questions that we have to face as human beings.

Why is it that sometimes evil appears to triumph? Why doesn't God do something about suffering? These are themes which are explored in various parts of the bible, such as in the Book of Job.

This passage was probably written in the 6th century BC when many of the people of Israel found themselves in exile. It is often referred to as one of the 'Servant Songs'. In 587BC Nebuchadrezzar and his troops had surrounded and then conquered Jerusalem. The leaders of Israel were taken back to Babylon and held in captivity. They were a tiny minority in the midst of a people who had little understanding or even sympathy for their beliefs. They must have felt beleaguered. It is almost definitely from that period that we have Psalm 137, a song of lament for a lost past:

*'By the rivers of Babylon—  
there we sat down and there we wept  
when we remembered Zion  
(Zion is another name for Jerusalem).*

In the midst of their desperation and loneliness, God sent a messenger to speak words of hope to encourage them and to assure them of God's deliverance. This messenger or 'servant' tells us that

- unlike the exiled Israelites, he is teachable and obedient. He has been given 'a tongue of a teacher' and he has not been 'rebellious' (vv 4-5);
- even when he suffers, God will sustain him (vv. 6-7);
- although his oppressors appear powerful, with God on his side, they will eventually be defeated (vv. 8-9).

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### Questions for Discussion

Discuss times when you have felt overwhelmed by a sense of injustice. What did it feel like and what did it make you want to do or say? How did you deal with it?

To what extent do we want to resist suffering and to what extent are we open to learn from it?

What are the things that help us hold onto God when the going is tough?

Reflect on what Jesus says about issues of suffering, evil and justice in Luke 18. 1-8.

### Ideas for Action

Each person to jot down

- ◆ One thing that has struck me
- ◆ What one thing am I going to do?
- ◆ What one thing will I pray about this week?



### Prayer

Spend some time initially in corporate silent prayer. Reflect on those times when you have felt hard done by or when you have suffered and offer them to God.

Pray for those who are suffering at the moment both those know to us near at home and those we see in the media. Pray that we may find ways to help and support them.

### Close

Finish by saying this collect and then the Living God's Love prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God,  
who in your tender love towards the human race  
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ  
to take upon him our flesh  
and to suffer death upon the cross:  
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,  
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.



Living God, draw us deeper into your love;  
Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve;  
Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news.  
Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us  
to live your love  
with generosity and joy,  
imagination and courage;  
for the sake of your world  
and in the name of Jesus. Amen.