

## House Group notes for 4 December 2011

### Welcome

Have you ever worked hard for, saved up for or waited for something you wanted very much. Was it worth it in the end?

### Worship

In this busy run-up to Christmas, life can sometimes be like the first version of Psalm 23 printed below. Read it through to yourselves and then read the actual version together. Spend a short time in prayer praising God and thanking him for the many blessings we enjoy as His children.

#### Psalm 23 Antithesis (author: anonymous)

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest.  
It makes me lie down only when exhausted.  
It leads me into deep depression. It hounds my soul.

It leads me in circles of frenzy, for activities sake.  
Even though I run frantically from task to task, I will never get it all done,  
For my ideal is with me  
Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me.

They demand performance from me, beyond the limits of my schedule.  
They anoint my head with migraines -my in-basket overflows.

Surely fatigue and time pressures shall follow me  
All the days of my life.  
And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

#### Psalm 23 (New Century Version)

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd;  
I have everything I need.
- 2 He lets me rest in green pastures.  
He leads me to calm water.
- 3 He gives me new strength.  
He leads me on paths that are right  
for the good of his name.
- 4 Even if I walk through a very dark valley,  
I will not be afraid,  
because you are with me.  
Your rod and your shepherd's staff comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a meal for me

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in front of my enemies.

You pour oil of blessing on my head;

you fill my cup to overflowing.

6 Surely your goodness and love will be with me

all my life,

and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

### Word

- Read Isaiah 40:1- 2. There is a lot of good news packed into these 2 verses. 'Unpack' them together. ( Note particularly what these verses say about the character of God)
- What do these 2 verses tell us about the value God sets upon us?
- Read Isaiah 40:3-5. Verse 5 speaks of the glory of the Lord being revealed. How do you think was it revealed in Isaiah's day? Isaiah is also speaking of another and much greater revelation of God's glory. What is this?
- Why do you think the words 'For the mouth of the Lord has spoken' are included? (Think about what these words add to the passage).
- Read verses 6-8. What is the message here about people? And about the word of the Lord? What can we learn from this with regard to whom we believe in and follow?
- Verse 8 says 'the word of our God endures forever'. Why is it important that we read the Bible and apply it to our lives?
- Read verses 9-11. What is the good news? What can we learn from these verses about God's love and compassion and how he views all of us?

### Witness

- Pray for us as a church as Christmas approaches that we will be able to communicate effectively the real meaning of Christmas to all who come to our services
- Pray for the staff team and the PCC as they seek God for new ways to reach out to the people of the town
- Pray for any known to us who are sick and those who are bereaved.
- Pray for each other - ask each person to share one particular need.