

(The Transfiguration - continued)

Surrounded by the cloud of God's presence on the mountain top the disciples would feel lost in a dense fog, with no idea of which way to turn.

- What does the story suggest about the way the disciples and the readers of the Gospel might respond to such a challenge?
- How far do you think an encounter with God or a 'glimpse of glory' always leaves people disorientated?
- How important is it for you to 'listen' to God's Son today? What are the challenges we face in doing so?

The voice from heaven identifying Jesus as the Son of God terrified the disciples.

- How far does your church life offer a sense of awe as you come (and invite others to come) into the presence of the Son of the Living God.

Matthew 28:16-20 - 'The Great Commission' - Matthew's last story

- Where do you see elements of certainty and uncertainty in this story?
- What 'glimpse of glory' do you think Matthew might be offering about the future of the Church?
- What do you think are the implications of this story for Methodists today as we seek to understand how to make decisions about the future of our church?

And FinallyYour Responsibilities

You are a representative of your circuit and as such a key decision maker within the life of the District and circuit.

- What from your reflections above will you take forward when you have to make policy decisions?
- What from all this will inform the decisions you make about your own situation and that of others?
- What do you hope people will keep in mind when making decisions which may affect your local situation?

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The Methodist Church Lincoln & Grimsby District

Mapping the Way Forward – Reshaping for Mission An Opportunity for Reflection

This leaflet has been prepared on behalf of the District to provide ways in which you can prepare yourself for decisions you may have to take in relation to the *Mapping* process. It offers opportunities for engagement with issues as well as theological reflection through Bible study so that we might all have greater understanding and thus be able to make more informed decisions.

The Context

The *Mapping* process is one which was agreed by the Methodist Conference. It is a means whereby circuits must review their mission and ministry with a view to being clear what their priorities will be and how resources will be used to meet them. This whole process must be completed and implemented no later than September 2013. It has been agreed within this District that as much as possible of this should be completed by September 2011. This then allows for some flexibility within the whole process.

The District did not begin the process within a blueprint for implementation but rather has encouraged circuits to determine locally its direction and pace. However, the District does maintain an important role in overseeing and co-ordinating the whole process and in ensuring possible proposals in one area do not jeopardise others.

This whole process should be viewed in a wider context:

- A desire that the Methodist Church structurally and practically is focused on engagement with mission
- An overall decline in a membership which is ageing, in ministers and in resources
- A need to use more effectively existing resources with possible far reaching effects e.g. a review of one or two minister stations
- A growing number of new ways of being Church or Fresh Expressions of Church
- A growing number of people involved within the life of the Methodist Church who have little or no experience of its tradition, heritage and practices

Certainty, Uncertainty and Glimpses of Glory: Peter and the Church in Matthew's Gospel

Texts: Matthew 14:22-33, 16:13-20 and 17:1-13, 28:16-20

Matthew's Gospel is called the 'Gospel of the Church', because it is only in Matthew that we find Jesus speaking of the Church, both times in conversations with Peter (16:18, 18:17). Matthew has a number of stories about him that are unique, where Peter can be seen as

seen as representing Jesus' followers in the puzzles they faced in living out his teachings.

In 'Matthew and the Margins', Warren Carter suggests that 'the Gospel is an identity-forming, lifestyle-shaping narrative for a community of disciples'. For Methodists today, seeking a way to build on some of the certainties of our heritage and ways of working in a time of great uncertainty for the Christian church as a whole, the stories of Peter in Matthew's Gospel can therefore open up real insights into the how we face our challenges. In a very real sense, they are the questions followers of Jesus have always wrestled with as they work through the certainties and uncertainties towards the glimpses of glory that emerge when we do God's will and fulfil Jesus' mission.

Read Matthew 14:22-33 - Walking on the Water

Peter is faced with certainty and uncertainty. He is both certain and uncertain about the presence of Jesus. The boat is unsafe, yet much safer than the water!

- What other elements of certainty and uncertainty can you see in the story?
- Where might the 'glimpse of glory' appear?
- What do you think motivated Peter to step out of the boat?
- What might he be trying to suggest about Jesus' relation to his disciples in times of certainty and uncertainty?
- In your opinion, what are the **certainties** we start with as Methodist disciples in our thinking about the future of our church, locally and nationally?
- What would you consider to be the main **uncertainties** we face?
- What suggestions might there be in this story about how to respond as today's disciples to these challenges?

Read Matthew 16:13-23 - Peter and Jesus at Caesarea Philippi

- Where do you see signs of certainty and uncertainty in this story?
- At what point is Peter's certainty mistaken and for what reasons?
- How do you feel about the strength of Jesus' response?
- What do you think this passage suggests about the certainties and uncertainties of understanding Jesus and his values?
- What might be the implications for us today?
- How might Jesus' values guide our thinking about our responsibilities for our church?

Peter's affirmation of faith is commended by Jesus who then talks of Peter as the rock on which the Church will be built. Peter therefore becomes a focal point for unity in the Church, a reminder that those who share one faith are part of one Church.

- How much does the unity of the whole of Christ's Church (or the search for that unity) affect decisions taken in your church and circuit?

In Methodism, we have expressed our unity through the notion of Connexionalism by which "*the structures of fellowship, consultation, government and oversight express the interdependence of all churches*, and help to point up, at all levels, necessary priorities in mission and service" and *local churches, Circuits and Districts exercise the greatest possible degree of autonomy*" (Called to Love and Praise, Conference Report, 1999).

- Can you identify ways in which interdependence and autonomy are balanced in your church and circuit?
- In your experience, have either 'interdependence' or 'autonomy' helped or hindered the work of your church or circuit?
- What then does Connexional or Connexionalism mean in your context?
- Reflect on the question 'what has the Connexion done for my circuit or church?'
For example begin by consider ministerial appointments, Local Preachers, buildings etc.
- What might local church members find difficult, problematic or hopeful in your answers?
- Share and discuss your conclusions with other Synod representatives in your circuit.

Having been commended for divine inspiration, Peter blunders and is told that he is 'setting his mind not on divine things but on human things'

- How might Jesus' values guide our thinking about our responsibilities for our church?
- How does your church or circuit endeavour to set its mind on divine rather than human priorities?
- Can you give any examples within your circuit of how we resist the idea that something might die in order that resurrection happen?

Read Matthew 17:1-13 - The Transfiguration

The disciples have a glimpse of glory. They see Jesus as God sees him! Perhaps we can understand the presence of Moses [the greatest and humblest of OT leaders] and Elijah [the disturber, the great non-conformist] as representing the best and most certain parts of God's relation to the chosen people. If so, Peter's response, in which he tried to hold on to them, suggests the importance for God's people of aspects of our tradition and history.

- What glimpses of glory do you see in the Methodist church today?
- What certainties do you think we can most treasure and look to for help and guidance in our Methodist heritage?
- What impact might they have on our decision making about our church today?