



## SESSION 1; “DARKNESS SHALL COVER THE EARTH”

“For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples” (Isaiah 60:2)

Isaiah 60 - 62 begins in great darkness, with “Zion”, Jerusalem and Israel, depicted as a woman lying in the ashes of mourning. The prophet conjures up the memory of the destruction of the city, which had been plundered (62:8), oppressed and despised (60:14). Her “ancient ruins” and “former devastations” (61:4) are proof of her suffering and humiliation. Her ruin is expressed in three ways:-

**Forsakenness (62:4).** Her own people have forgotten her and stay away from her. She too feels that God has turned away from her and withheld His favour.

**Barrenness and desolation (62:4).** Jerusalem is a wasteland, stripped of grain and wine, symbols of prosperity, and with her walls broken down. She lacks vitality and the ability to bring forth anything new.

**Darkness (60:2).** Isaiah uses a word for darkness that echoes the darkness that preceded creation (Genesis1:2). It is the darkness of night that brings fear and chaos and a loss of control. In the depths of this night Jerusalem is in mourning, silent, a ruin with no sign of life, and no sense of expectation that God will come and be with His people again.

We too have been living through a time of forsakenness, barrenness, and darkness. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has raised questions about “Where is God in all this?” We have entered on a time of economic hardship and financial austerity which has made many people’s lives perilous and uncertain.

It feels as though we too are living through very dark times, full of despair and death. But the prophet Isaiah tells us that it is in the darkness that a word will appear. As Jerusalem embraces an ending, so the possibility of new beginnings emerges.

**R**eflect on the darkness we have been living through and what that has meant to you. What have been the darkest moments for you during the past twelve months?

### P RAYER

*Lord, when we walk in darkness,  
and the valley of the shadow of death,  
when we cannot feel your presence  
and are tempted to give up,  
help us to know that you are never really absent,  
but that we are held so close to your heart  
that we cannot see your face,  
and that underneath are your everlasting arms.*



### MUSIC FOR MEDITATION

**Surely He Hath Borne Our Griefs**  
**(from the Messiah) - Handel**

## SESSION 1; “DARKNESS SHALL COVER THE EARTH”

“For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples” (Isaiah 60:2)



### PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

*Interpret in any way you like using materials you have in your own home.*

*You do not have to be artistic.*

1. Focus on creating the first page of a home-made, loose-leaf journal. We will add to it each week, documenting your journey from darkness to light.
2. Look around your home and gather anything black that you could use, eg. paper, card, bin liner, buttons, fabric, wool, pen, paint, ink etc.
3. Join together (staple, stitch, glue, wire) your pieces to create an A4/A5 “page”.

You could use different textures, words, newspaper cuttings, patterns, images. The page could be flat or 3D. Keep developing your page(s) during the week.

