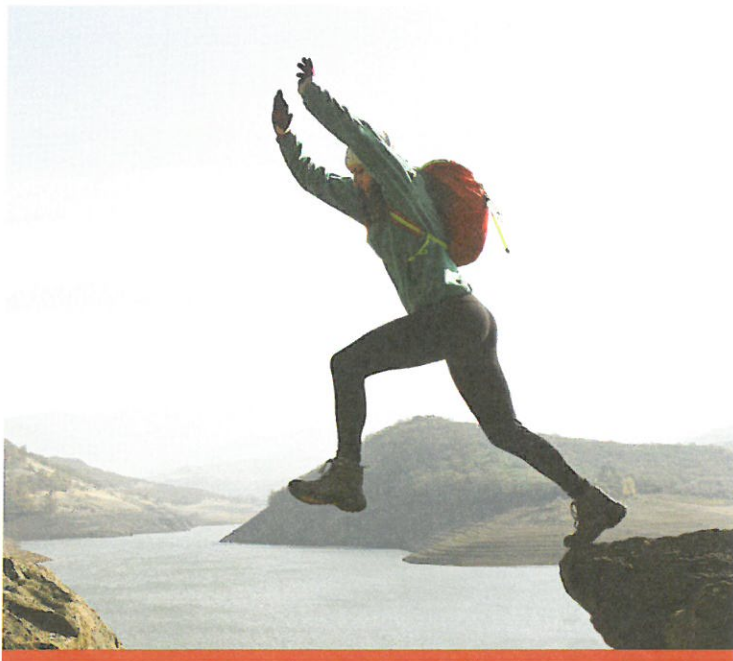


A leap of faith



Make the most of the summer
We're all going on a summer holiday

by Heather Smith

Have you had, or are you having, or going to have, a summer holiday? Perhaps you've planned a week or two of complete physical rest, or an adventurous break that takes you away from your normal activities. If you can leave the smartphone and tablet buried deep in your luggage, brought along for emergencies only, how much better that rest will be.

Jesus, when he withdrew from the crowds to spend some time alone, was not plagued by the devices that

endlessly ring, bleep and vibrate to get our attention. True rest takes us away from the concerns of everyday, where our brains whirr away, processing the latest news and events, becoming embroiled in the politics and concerns of work or relationships.

Jesus knew this. He withdrew into the desert – a truly isolated space on the edge of the safety of the city. Here, the bustle of the streets was out of earshot and he could concentrate on the stillness that is God. 🙏

“I have often noticed how interesting footpaths and bridleways start just beyond the brambles at the end of tarmacked roads marked 'dead end'. And it seems to me that this is very often where prayer starts too.”

Malcolm Guite (born 1957), English poet, singer-songwriter, Anglican priest and academic

Heather Smith *reflects on* Hebrews 11:1-3. 8-16

You often hear people say “I have no faith,” or something along those lines. As a statement, it isn't true. Everyone has faith, or it would be impossible to live. You could make no plans for tomorrow if you had no faith that the sun would rise and another day would begin. You couldn't sustain relationships if you had no faith that another person loved and cared for you. We all choose to use our faith in different ways. Perhaps it leads us to choose a particular path because we believe it will be good for us. Perhaps we choose to live faithfully by our values.

“Faith,” says the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”. Our lives are shot through with faith, because so much is not seen. And yet we doubt we have faith.

Striving for faith is pointless, yet we try to make it happen, anxiously trying to make ourselves believe. The Old Testament patriarchs listed in Hebrews are examples of faith, but we cannot be them. They lived out their own faith – our responsibility is to live out our own. As we try to live faithfully we will naturally grow closer to the mystery that is God – the source of our faith. And growing closer will change the way we act, until we find ourselves, perhaps, taking an unexpected step that we never could have imagined. Faith has crept up on us. 🙏

Faithful God, show us how to live with faith, however small or large, until our lives are transformed by the unseen and our faith guides us gently into your ways. Amen.

Faith hacks

The transfiguration, part 2

by Alan Jefferies

A fresh angle on the transfiguration and how we can apply it to our daily life.

Last week we read the story of the transfiguration and meditated on how it makes us feel – buoyed up, or inadequate that we don't have such dazzling experiences in everyday life. Here's a little “faith hack” – a reset button you can use as often as you need.

Stop, just for a moment, whatever you're doing. Let your attention naturally come to rest on something in your

immediate surroundings and meditate briefly on it. What is it? How is it made? What purpose does it serve? It might be something functional – a spoon, for example – or something beautiful – a plant. Whatever it is, find a reason to be grateful and say a prayer of thanks. Even if it's something you dislike, or which has an unpleasant association, you can give thanks for the lesson you learn from it. Then carry on with whatever you were doing. Because when we take a little pause, everything becomes dazzling! 🙏