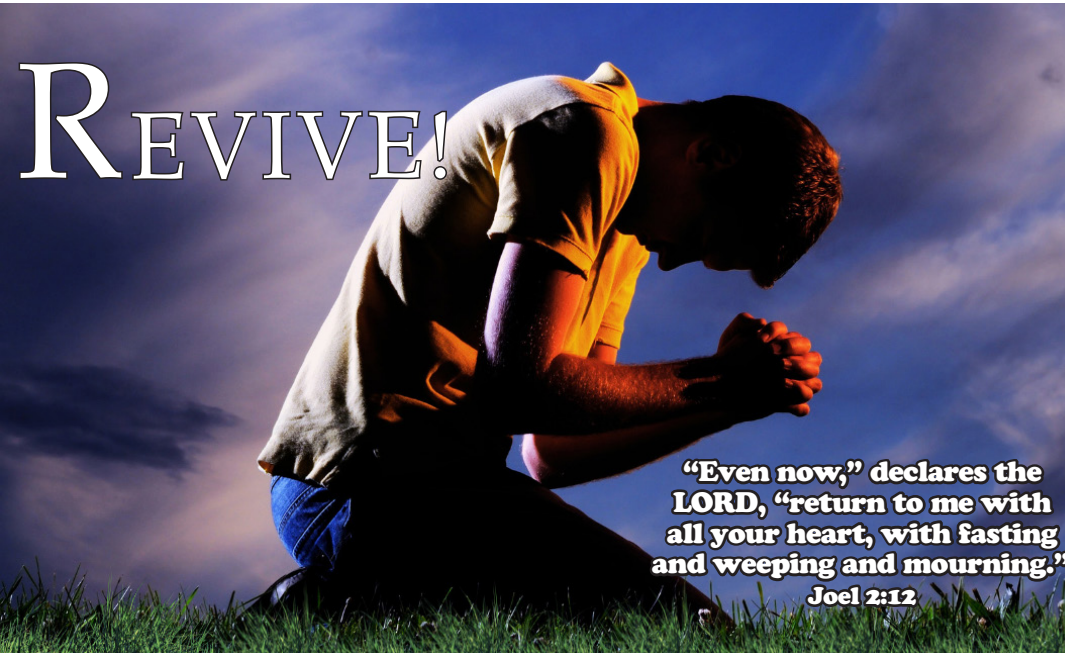


REVIVE!



“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

Joel 2:12

What do the prophets Joel, Micah and Habakkuk have in common? These ancient prophets all have a modern-day urgent relevance for our decaying world ... and for the Body of Christ, which so desperately needs to be listening to what God is saying in these days. It seems like so many people are living life as if this world does not end with judgement before the throne of God. It really is a life-or-death scenario!

In the light of the judgement to come, Joel uses the phrase, *‘the day of the Lord’* five times. He calls for repentance and promises restoration by the pouring out of God’s Spirit on all people. Micah reveals two sides of God’s character: condemnation and consolation; justice as well as mercy. He famously calls us to *‘act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God.’* Habakkuk is rare among the prophets in that it is a conversation between him and God. It

starts very honestly with the words, *‘Why Lord!’* It’s a complaint to God for not doing enough, and then for doing the wrong thing! He comes in the end to a place of trust that God is working His purpose out.

This year we introduced ‘Days of Prayer’ to our programme and these prophets have been inspiring us. In this issue of REVIVE! we are sharing something of what we have learnt in the hope that it may encourage you in your own prayer lives, in these often-times despairing days.

Our journeys are of faith, hope and love. **Faith** is God’s gift to us; **Hope** is our gift to God and **Love** is our union with God.

We and the world are in a dangerous moment. These prophets still speak today and what are they saying? *“Turn to Jesus; stand firm in Him; be filled with the Holy Spirit and open your eyes to see the world through God’s eyes – there is glory to be seen.”* Not least of all I suspect they would exhort us to pray!

With love from us all at CCHC

Lamenting the Locusts



The Book of Joel speaks of the devastation of locusts invading the land, swarms of insects that destroy everything in their wake.

In Chapter 1, he describes the effect on trees, crops, food, water as well as people who either numb themselves with drink or despair, losing all sense of joy. Even the animals pant for God (1:20)!

What are the locusts that are devastating the foundations of our country and world? I'm sure you could name many ... the drums of war; the crumbling social contact fuelling unrest and protest; economies and immigration at stress points; wholesale turning from God and our Christian heritage.

What can we do? The temptation, as with Joel's compatriots, is to become numb or despair.

For this prophet, the first thing to do in prayer is to acknowledge and articulate to God the pain we are feeling – in other words – to lament. He actually says to wail, mourn, fast and put on sackcloth. Does this feel like too much? Perhaps, but lament we can, and lament we must! How?

Maybe with words. Over 60 of the 150 Psalms are lament psalms – use their words to express yourself. Sometimes with groans – Romans 8:23 says we 'groan inwardly' through the Holy Spirit in us for God's broken world, and in so doing we are sharing God's heart. Be it a Psalm or a sigh, may your lament to the God of hope lead you to peace in Him.

Judgements and Promises

Micah contrasts judgements and promises. (It's a gospel formula too; light and dark, lost and found). All around today, juxtapositions like truth and lies, evil and good are visible. Use Micah's prophecy as a prayer prompt for yourself, family, Church and nation. Use his judgements (mostly related to **IDOLATRY** – choosing our will over God's) for repentance and confession. Use His Messianic promises (signs of **HOPE**) to bless others, as the Holy Spirit leads you.

Judgements:

- ▶ *Oppression: those who plot evil on their beds; people robbed of freedom (2:1-2);*
- ▶ *Deception: those who should know better serve the people badly; trust in leaders is eroded (3:5);*
- ▶ *Corruption: among civil and spiritual leaders; social injustice and inequality blossoms (3:9-11);*
- ▶ *Division in families and neighbourhoods: how do you see this today? (7:5-6).*

Promises:

- ▶ *I will gather you like sheep in a sheepfold – the remnant of Israel. The King will lead and make a way before you (2:12-13);*
- ▶ *The Lord's place of worship will be established and from it will flow His Word and the law. Weapons of war will become farming tools (4:1-8);*
- ▶ *Announcing the birth place of the one to come, but His origin is from 'of old', from ancient times, eternity. His greatness will reach the ends of the earth and He will be our peace (5:2-5);*
- ▶ *Who is a God like you? Who pardons sin and forgives the transgression. The one who does not stay angry forever but delights in mercy (7:18-19).*

Ask God the Holy Spirit to help you pray – He loves to do it!

Glory Covered

Is it audacity that leads Habakkuk to complain to God? No, it's exemplary. Habakkuk waits for an answer! We would do well, to listen for God's response. Interestingly, God's responses indicate that He spoke longer than the prophet. Habakkuk chose to 'look to see what God will say' (2:1). What do you think that means?



**God is working his purpose out
as year succeeds to year;
God is working his purpose out
and the time is drawing near;
Nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory
of God as the waters cover the sea.**
(Hymn by Arthur Campbell Ainger
(1841-1919))



If possible read through the whole hymn and be encouraged as you meditate on this verse. And as you pray, remember that God is in control and the glory of God, visible around us, is increasing year by year. The last line repeated in each verse is something God showed Habakkuk (2:14). Perhaps the following verses could be useful for prayer too:

- ▶ The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him (2:20).
Be still and take time to listen to Him;
- ▶ The just shall live by faith (2:4).
Declare, 'I believe Lord' as you pray;
- ▶ In wrath remember mercy (3:2).
Cry out 'Have mercy Lord';
- ▶ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour (3:17-18).
Give thanks to the Lord in songs of praise.

Why not prayerfully be creative and draw a triptyque from the three chapters of Habakkuk – what might the Spirit be saying as you consider your picture?

Return and Love Mercy

RETURN

Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (Joel 2:13).

Remember.

**You were built for this,
the ancient path
inscribed upon your bones,
the persistent pattern
echoing in your heartbeat.
Let this be the season
you turn your face toward the One
who calls to you:**

RETURN, RETURN.

**Let this be the day
you open wide your arms
to the wind that knows
how to bear you home.**

(Jan Richardson, from Circle of Grace:
A Book of Blessings for the Seasons)



LOVE MERCY - 'HESED'

H'esed' is a defining characteristic of God. It is linked to His compassion and graciousness. It is expressed in His willingness to forgive wrongdoing and to take upon Himself the sin, rebellion and wrongdoing of His people.

- ▶ Joel – steadfast love (2:13)
- ▶ Micah – love mercy (6:8)
- ▶ Habakkuk – remember mercy (3:2)

Reflect on the joy of the Father when the prodigal son returned. Running unashamedly; rejoicing extravagantly; celebrating uncontrollably! Receive and know the Father's lavish love for yourself as you meet with Him in prayer.

Recent CCHC Testimonies



- ◆ *I felt cared for as soon as my bare feet touched the soft grass of the garden, and the peace of it embraced me with its presence. I felt connected to God and wept and received understandings. The prayer session with the Chaplain was extraordinary. Apt, deep and healing. I was so grateful.*
- ◆ *Powerful ministry! The Lord has given me a new name/identity, and renewed a sense of purpose. So blissful being looked after for a few days by beautiful people.*
- ◆ *The peace and beauty of the people and natural surroundings speak volumes of the Father God's love in action, and I leave greatly encouraged in spirit, mind and body.*
- ◆ *I have received guidance and reassurance about how to declutter my life from things that no longer require as much time spent on them. To see my body as something to nurture and care for. Healing of mental and emotional conflict.*
- ◆ *As always I have been refreshed and revived by being at CCHC.*
- ◆ *I am very blessed by the loving atmosphere here. Everyone so kind and caring. Your hospitality is 'out of the world' – literally.*

Prayer Requests

Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King, His love endures forever. Lord, stir us afresh to be thrilled with your goodness.

Please prayerfully consider being a regular supporter to this necessary work – Jesus is here and He is drawing increasing numbers to heal, bless and restore.

Pray that we followers of Jesus will be recognised as companions of Jesus as a result of our time spent with Him.

Please pray for:

- ▶ Trustees' oversight of God's work here;
- ▶ Strength and protection for the CCHC Team in the busyness, programmed events and the rhythm of worship, ministry and hospitality;
- ▶ On-going maintenance; and planning for work in gardens and grounds;
- ▶ Re-dedicated prayer rooms to be used more and more.



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PERSONAL DETAILS

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