

## Adventuring

*4 Advent Reflections for groups or individuals in the second half of life*

### Week One:

#### Abraham and Sarah:

In their older age life for Abraham and Sarah took an unexpected new turn. Guests arrived with what seemed an unlikely message: Sarah would bear a child. Sarah's reaction was to laugh: the time for such new beginnings was past.

But then Abraham and Sarah's life had been like that for some time. From a settled life God called them to journey to a land they did not know, promising them descendants as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.



#### **Older age is a time for new adventure.**

It is time to stop playing safe with life. We know our years are shorter. Now is the season to give ourselves to what really matters and to live all that is in us to the full

We are being drawn into a new intimacy with God, and trust alone will open up the way. And so, with Abraham and Sarah, we set out on an untrodden path, leaving behind what is comfortable and familiar as we move in response to the Spirit

We make the journey not only for ourselves but for generations to come. But It is not surprising that we sometimes laugh with Sarah, unable to believe that our life's passage could have such consequence.

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

### **Genesis 12: 1-5**

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'Oh yes, you did laugh.'

### **Genesis 18: 1-15**

## **Some questions for reflection and sharing**

1. How do you respond to the story of Abraham and Sarah? What challenges you / troubles you / inspires you?
2. Do you have any sense of a 'journey' that God desires to lead you on. it probably won't involve physical travel but it might be about some way in which you are being nudged to 'move on'.
3. Sarah and Abraham are promised a new child and a new beginning. What new thing is being brought to birth in your own life at this moment?
4. Do you identify with Sarah's laughter? Do you have particular points of unbelief – areas of your life where it seems difficult to trust God?

## **What is it time for you to do?**

- This might be taking seriously how God calls you by name and invites you to live in awareness of his presence through a deeper commitment to prayer
- Perhaps it's time to dare to do that something that has long been in your heart
- Or is it time to do something generously for those who will follow you?

## **Some Advent challenges:**

1. Advent comes as autumn fades into winter. The days are short and the light is low. The sun, even when it does pierce the clouds, lacks any real warmth. Yet now bulbs are planted for seasons yet to come. Buy some bulbs [for example tulips, daffodils or crocuses]. Plant them in your garden or a window box. What hopes or desires go into the ground of God's love as you plant?
2. Go on an Abraham and Sarah journey to a place that has some meaning for you. It might be somewhere you know well, or somewhere that is entirely new. As you go, and when you arrive, reflect on what the journey expresses for you.

## Sarah's prayer

You made me laugh  
Such impossible things!  
How could it be?  
I'm old. Too old  
Past it – whatever 'it' may be

You made me laugh  
Such crazy words!  
What me?  
I've had my day.  
My day – now gone from me.

You made me laugh  
Such pie in the sky!  
Or is it just my  
doubting but longing  
for what, you say, will be.

You made me laugh  
Such mad dreams!  
O let it be!  
Your mad dreaming  
come to birth in me!

### **Prayer:**

Lord of adventurers  
give us the daring to go with you,  
though we do not know the way.  
Give us the courage of Abraham and Sarah,  
risking all in response to your invitation.  
Let us be as generous and free as your great giving,  
when you pitched your tent among us  
and made our flesh your own.