2014 Lenten Book:

I was wondering about the title – “Stepping out in Faith – the Blessings and Challenges.

Based on the OT readings and references to the Psalm for Year A.

Introduction:

It was put to me the other day – with our supermarket shopping we can purchase most fruit and vegies all year round. We are losing the concept for a season the blessings of that season.

I wonder whether or not we are losing the importance of the liturgical season. End of last year – the start of the liturgical year Advent in many ways is no longer a season of preparation but rather an early start to Christmas!

Many are overlooking the importance and place of Lent. There is a sense that we go start to Easter. Wonder whether we just want the good times – birth and resurrection – new life – and it has been my experience that you need to journey through the season of preparation.

Lent Re-visited back in whenever – but we need to revisit Lent; we need to refocus on Lent for our spiritual health, so that we can really enter Easter.

Share the last sermon of a retired priest from Willochra – as he reflected over his life he wished he had spent more time grappling the hard sayings of Jesus. So easy to go to the “soft” (expand) sayings so that we feel good. However deep growth comes in the grappling with the hard and challenging saying of the Scriptures (this year the OT readings) along with the some references to the Psalms.(Also OT)

Perhaps say a few words about the place of the OT.

So I invite you to enter Lent 2014 and allow yourself to be challenged with the purpose of growing closer to God and being entering deeper in to the message of the Old Testament Scriptures; so that at Easter we can celebrate the resurrection as renewed person of faith to serve our Lord in the season of Easter.

Study One:

Genesis 2:15-17 & Genesis 3:1-7 Psalm 132

Theme: Stepping out in Faith - Actions and Consequences

Text – some pointers

* God issues advice – we have free will and we can either obey God or use our free will to disobey.
* But as we journey through life – we make decisions and there will always be consequences.
* God provides – re the Garden – God sets the parameters – it is a question of how firm we stick by God’s guidance?
* We all have to address the matter of competing voices – the challenge in our world today. But this and life will be netter, easier etc. Do this and you will be fulfilled etc. So what is the place of God’s input in our lives?
* Psalm reminds us – quote etc. - God forgives sin – Psalm provides a way forward vvs 9 onwards
* What is sin? Have we gone soft on sin? What is repentance? Three aspects – sorry to God, sorry to those we have wronged and we seek God’s help to overcome that weakness in our lives etc. Psalm we go forth in the strength of Christ a
* Each week when attend worship we have the confession – how seriously do confess our sin. Before each time we come to worship, do we spend time reflecting over the past week and come prepared to confess our sins. What we do we thing, how are we moved when we hear the words of assurance (Absolution)
* So this Lent – we must people who confess our sin and know the joy of forgiveness and live it out (May draw on the Lord’s Prayer.)

Study Two:

Theme: Stepping out in Faith on the journey.

Genesis 12:1-4a Psalm 121

Some pointers:

* The Bruce Hishway from Mackay to Rockhampton is fairly isolated and it has had a number of black spots. So signs have been put up to attract the attention of children such as “Are we there yet?” “Mum, how far to go?” etc – will pull them off the web.
* I often think the signs on the road would have summed up how poor Abram must have felt. Refer to his age.
* He went forth in faith knowing the promise (which took some time to come to fruition)
* As we journey in faith we do not know what is ahead of us – what blessings, enriching challenges that are before us etc.
* Discuss blessings and curse. In living the Christian life – pilgrimage – there are blessings but there are those who will curse us but it has been my experience that while people may not curse as such – they are passive aggressive. Sometimes the hardest place to live out our faith is in the family.
* Lot was a fellow traveller – near the Dead Sea – story here.
* But in living the Christian life – the Psalm has much to say to us – we all seek help – we cannot go it alone.
* What help does the Lord offer – refer back to last week and free will and but we have to let the Lord help us – foot will not stumble – defend from all evil – relate to the baptismal promises – defend from all evil – the Lord’s defence is forever.
* So, as we continue to journey with God – may we go in faith knowing that Christ is with us.
* (perhaps – mention the question for the Christian isn’t where is God because God is always with us – but where are we with God and pick up on Ps 121 vvs, 2,5 & 8

Session Three

Theme: Stepping out in Faith – needs and wants..

Exodus 17:1-7 Psalm 95 (known as the Venite to all the MP lovers!)

Some pointers:

* I often hear people make comments like the last question in this passage, “id the Lord among us or not?
* Provide the context of the Exodus reading.
* We live in a society often f
* Focussed on wants rather than needs – give examples.
* Explore the context and place of water in Scripture – in particular this passage and pointing to Baptism – and in some Churches the renewal of baptismal vows.
* Psalm – how God is named – what is in control of God – and our response – picking up on names and meaning such as Meribah and Massah – time and the forty years – touching on the level of impatience in society today – may touch on the last verse of Ps 95:11 – what it means etc.
* So we continue to journey with God – accepting the challenges and trusting in God.

Session Four

Theme: Stepping out in Faith – expect the unlikely

1 Samuel 16:1-13 Psalm 23

Some pointers:

* Psalm 23 – often associated with funerals and with grief.
* Explain the grieving process in Samuel’s time.
* The question of grief is one that is sometimes not addressed by people. Instead of saying that a person has died, there is a tendency today to use such terms as “slipped away”, “passed on”
* Elizabeth Kubler Ross has provided – stages of death and dying and others have worked on it.
* Samuel and faith – fear of life and journeying in faith.
* God’s way of understanding is not the same as ours – the youngest, not the eldest etc.
* Spirit of the Lord was on David that day – expand.
* Continue to explore the qualities of God in the 23rd Psalm.
* So we continue the journey with God – knowing he is with us and upholds us and that is ways are not necessarily our ways.

Session Five:

Theme: Stepping out in Faith – New life.

Readings:

Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 130.

Some pointers.

* Come to the Fifth Sunday of Lent and the focus this week is on new life. Life can be described as Ezekiel describes. It can be an image of us personally as well as that od the Church. Make references to this imagery in the world today – Middle East. Africa and in our own nation – sizeable part under drought.
* Life in this situation – sometimes hard to have a vision a better future but we need ot go forth in faith.
* Expand on hearing the word of the Lord – refer to the John Meakin earlier etc.
* God can out us together – as individuals – as a community of faith
* Our being open to the Holy Spirit.
* Go to the Psalm and recapture the thought that God is in control, but we have to be open to God if there is to be forgiveness and redemption etc.