

Monday, January 11, 2016

Lent Resources Inspired by Australian Desert

This year ABM's Lenten resources emerge out of the Australian desert with 40 days of Scripture readings accompanied by images and voices from Australian artists and writers and the long Christian tradition of desert-shaped theology.

They are available free as an App or by daily email. See www.abmission.org/lent for further information.

ABM's Education Advocacy Officer, Celia Kemp reflects:

Rowan Williams has described Australia as a "country with the desert at its heart, a desert that it has only begun to explore spiritually".

In the Australian desert you can still find yourself alone in a landscape where there is nothing made by a human visible at all.

It looks much like it looked hundreds of years ago, and probably will look much the same in hundreds of years to come.

The desert feels strangely indifferent. For those of us shaped by the busyness of the city it can initially seem empty and dull.

After a little while, its lack of interactivity can be very frightening.

It becomes quite apparent that it is utterly outside our control.

Who are we in such a landscape?

The Israelites found themselves in a desert. They turned out to be people who preferred busy slavery in Egypt with a predictable supply of food and water to trusting in the uncontrollable provision of God.

We are likely to find that we are not much different.

In the Christian tradition the desert is a place of serious temptation.

So why go there at all?

In the Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality, Andrew Harvey is cited, "*We are saved in the end by the things that ignore us.*"

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The desert is also a place of beauty and wonder where a way is prepared for us to see God.

During Lent many people follow Jesus into the desert for 40 days.

This is a deeply radical Christian tradition.

Jesus didn't choose it as part of a carefully thought out ten-point plan to maximize his potential.

Lent isn't a goal we achieve.

It is more like a letting go.

We give things up. Our time. The comfort of busyness and distraction. Our illusion of control.

Like Jesus, we resist the temptation to fill the space with something apparently more productive.

Then we wait in the wild hope that we are being prepared to see God.

ENDS

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The Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) is the national mission agency of the Anglican Church of Australia. For over 160 years ABM has been assisting people all over the world to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, provide health and education services, improve agricultural practices and strengthen the Church.