



1 Peter 1:3-9

(Lectionary Year A Easter 2)

By Beth Barnett

This reading helps us to conceptualise of life in God being nurtured and protected like an unborn child still in its mother's womb.

You will need:

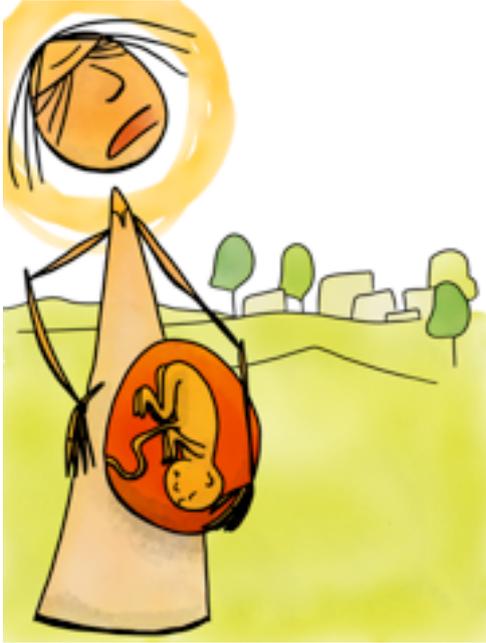
- A few people prepared to share a pregnancy story (see below)
- Art image by Chris Booth for 1 Peter 1:3-9
- Screen and/or print copies of the text with the months marked (see below)

Time required:

7 minutes

Connect

We are reading from the Bible today, from the book of Peter – it takes its name from one of Jesus' disciples. It's written in the form of a letter from that disciple to people who have become followers of Jesus in places far from where Jesus lived, and after Jesus' life among us as a visible human. So although the places named don't include [insert the names of your local places]



Context

We're reading from the beginning of the letter and Looking at the Picture by artist Chris Booth, I wonder if anyone might like to guess what this beginning part of the letter is about?

Take suggestions – accept and affirm all responses. Encourage alternate, out of the box responses. Make it clear that the exercise of wondering is not for getting to the 'right answer' as quickly as possible, but exploring how many different possibilities might be seen in an idea.

We are going to explore one of those suggestions. We're going to explore the idea that this reading imagines God (point out each aspect as it appears in the image:

- as a pregnant woman
- with a little baby grown
- inside the protection of her body
- and there is some pain and suffering for the mother
- and the baby feels some of that too, but remains safe
- there is great joy coming when the baby is going to be born
- when it is ready to be seen (revealed)
- but in the meantime the mother and the baby are connected by love
- they know each other, even though they can't see each other.

Invite some people in the congregations of different ages to tell brief stories (in a hundred words or less) of their experiences of pregnancy. Either as a mother carrying a child, or as an along-sider (friend, child, father) experiencing a child in utero.

Examples include

- *helping a mother give birth*
- *feeling the contractions begin*
- *a sibling feeling the baby kick or move inside their mummy*
- *seeing the image of a baby on ultrasound*

Try not to only choose mothers. A range of perspectives offered here will strengthen the sense of community, and underline that the world isn't divided into 'families' and 'singles' but that we all encounter one another as more than our age/gender/relationship-status/etc...



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You could leave this open to their own ideas of what to share, or give some topic prompts from the keywords of the passage: birth, protection, revealed, joy, suffering, unseen, love.

Invite them to provide an image of an ultrasound, or the 'baby bump', perhaps a pregnancy test positive result. (Be sensitive and always ask for a second opinion before displaying anything you think might possibly be over the edge.)

Thanks to all who have shared their stories.

If we were reading this text from the Bible in the first century, in the early church, we probably wouldn't need reminding about childbirth, because childbirth was a common household occurrence. Everyone from the youngest to the oldest would have heard and seen some of the process of babies being born in their own houses, which for most people weren't very large. The author is using an image as everyday as sheep or buildings or fire.

So now we have a picture in our head of the idea that the reading is using, we are going to read it together. And we are going to read according our birthdays.

Marked on the reading are the months of the year. Please read the line which corresponds to the month of your birthday. Take a few moments now to work out which is your line and have a practice reading it to yourself. If you're not sure how to read all the words, ask someone around to help. They will be glad to help if they can. We are all here to serve and support each other.

(display on screen, or ensure everyone has a print copy – see below)

Content

1 Peter 1:3-9

January: Blessed

February: be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

March: By his great mercy he has given us a new

April: birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are

May & June: being protected

July: by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to

August: be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—

September: being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested

October: by fire, may



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November: be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you

December: believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
(repeat reading a second time)

Consequence

This reading helps us remember that life in God – is exactly that – life IN God, protected, sustained, fed, nurtured and growing like a baby within a mummy – how precious we are to God. God suffers the greater pain, compared to our pain, and though we don't see God yet, God's warm loving presence is all around us. There is great Joy ahead – both for us and for God, when we will see God face to face. Perhaps there is one part of this mother and baby image that really comforts or interests or challenges you. That's something to keep thinking about and talking to God about through this week.



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First Peter
chapter 1 verses 3-9



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