

## Faith Confirmed 2024

### Session 1 – WELCOME TO FAITH CONFIRMED at St James'

'Faith Confirmed' is a resource for those exploring the Anglican faith, covering every aspect of Christian living. This course confronts the big questions we have when thinking about faith and even commitment:

- What is the purpose of life?
- How can we know God?
- Why is Jesus' death so important?
- How should I pray?
- Do I have to go to church to be a Christian?



Each section contains a clear explanation of what Anglicans believe, stories that further explore the subjects, questions for personal reflection and group discussion, Bible studies and encouragement to reflect and pray. This resource encourages us to apply what we reflect upon to our everyday life.

So... DOES GOD EXIST? How did everything come into being?

You won't ever be asked if you completely understand all this. But you are asked whether you believe and trust. This is called faith. It is a different sort of knowledge. It is the knowledge of being known and loved, and of loving in return. Christians believe this is God given and beautiful. So, we start by asking, how then do we know God?

#### Knowing God is there

Some people might say: *"It doesn't matter anyway...?"* Is God really there...? This is the most important question in the whole universe. The answer you give will affect your whole life. Either God is there – or God isn't. There's no halfway. If God is there, then there is meaning and purpose in life. God calls us into friendship and into a Christian way of life and Christians believe there is a life beyond this life. However, if God is not there, then the whole meaning of life is changed, and this is it and you have to find that meaning from within yourself. You can please yourself if you like. There is no joy or pleasure or hope greater than you have now – this is all life offers.

Others may say: *"It's just a matter of opinion..."*

People think this way because it is the way they want to think. It's really much more comfortable. It gets you off the hook. Once you admit that God may be there, life becomes much more challenging. You need to look further at what God is like and what God's purpose for your life may be. Belief in the God who made heaven and earth is not a matter of opinion.

Belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is at the heart of the Christian faith for we believe that Jesus is God's Son. Jesus reveals to us that God is our Father, and that God is available to us through the Holy Spirit. You won't ever be asked if you completely understand all this. But you are asked whether you believe and trust. This is called faith. It is a different sort of knowledge. It is the knowledge of being known and loved, and of loving in return.

As we seek to answer questions about God it is worth knowing that we believe the Christian faith is not a human invention. There are signs of God's existence and handiwork in creation for anyone to read (Acts 14.15–17). But we believe in the way we do because God has come to seek us out and has made himself known to us. Or to put it another way, God longs to be in relationship with each and every one of us. For Christians, belief in God is a matter of evidence. When you begin to look, there is a great deal of evidence and it all points one way.

**'I believe in God'** - There are many different ways to sum up the evidence that points to God's existence. This is just one way: **Seeing God in creation** - Have a think about the things you find the most amazing about creation and the natural world. You may like to use **Psalm 8** as a starting point for reflection:



*O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honour. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*  
(Psalm 8)

Consider these questions:

- ❖ The universe had a beginning. *How and who began it?*
- ❖ The universe has order and beauty. *Who arranged it?*
- ❖ The universe shows evidence of design. *Who is the designer?*



### God as Creator

All the evidence of our senses and of the sciences points us towards there being a creator, to God, who made the heavens and the earth.

The first book in the Bible is Genesis and here we read an account of creation. Although most Christians don't believe it all happened literally as written, we understand this to be a guide to God's activity in the world, bringing life into being:

*'In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God (the Spirit of God) swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.'* (Genesis 1:1-6)

### Seeing God in yourself and others

Again, we can see God in ourselves and each other. Just think for a moment about the things you find wonderful about yourself and about people in general. Then ask these questions:

- ❖ Everyone has a sense of right and wrong – a conscience?  
This is true the whole world over. *Who put it there?*
- ❖ All men and women have an inbuilt need to worship someone or something. *Why is that need to worship there within us? Who put that need there?*
- ❖ All people long to experience love. It can be the most powerful force in our lives. *Where did it come from?*

### Knowing God for yourself - Where are you on your own inner journey?

Christians believe that God made the universe. We believe that humankind is special within God's creation. And we believe that God has shown us what he is like, through the Bible – which is a record of God's relationship with many thousands of people over several thousand years. God then continued to show us his love for us through the life of Jesus Christ. God, the maker of heaven and earth, calls us into friendship through Jesus. And knowing God changes our whole lives. If we agree that God made the world, then surely, *we need God in our lives!*