

Connecting the Sunday Sparkle at Hearsall Baptist with the Daily Dust of Life

Welcome

- Think of a time when people doubted something you were telling them.
- How did that make you feel?
- Did they get over their doubt? If so, how?

Worship

- Open your Bibles at **Psalm 118**.
- Read it aloud briskly, with each person reading a few verses at a time.
- Share the thoughts that strike you most.
- Turn some of them into a thanksgiving prayer.

Word

Have one person **read John 20: 19 - 25**. The rest of you, listen *from the point of view of Thomas*.

- Share how you feel Thomas might have felt.
- How much sympathy do you have for him?

Think about verse 22 for a bit. At the back of your mind might be Pentecost Day in Acts 2: 1 - 13, as written up by Luke. So we have two contrasting accounts of the reception of the Holy Spirit.

- Which do you find most helpful? Why?

Have a think about verse 23 too. This is quite an announcement Jesus makes! We know Jesus was criticised for telling people their sins were forgiven.

- Jesus did and said lots of things during his ministry. Why, in this intimate and unique moment, does he single out forgiveness of sins?
- Do you think this business of forgiving (or releasing) sins is for clergy only, or for the wider community of faith? Try to find a scenario where this might work in practice.

Read John 20: 26 - 29

- Consider verse 28. Can you think of any bolder declarations of Jesus' divinity anywhere in Scripture? What does this tell you about Thomas?

- What, if anything, stops you from believing? Help each other find some ways of getting over these barriers to faith.
- What does it mean to believe in Jesus? Is faith a **conviction** you hold in your head, or a liberated **way of living** or a joyful **feeling** in the heart?
- If you answer all three, which comes first for you?
- Might that be different for different people?
- Which do you need to develop the most?

Response

- Read David's letter in the new edition of the Messenger. How do you respond to his image of the church as a campfire in the wilderness?
- Does the image reveal anything about your own faith?
- Write down a few thoughts in your journal about how you can make the fire burn brighter; or create an artwork depicting the church in this way (picture, poem, song etc).