



God is in the business of making all things new...

Throughout the Bible, and across human history, and in this current age, God surprises us with new things. As Spring gathers pace, what are the new things that God is showing you in your life? In your community? In your corner of the Kingdom?

All this month we're thinking about newness with God. We will explore the tension of how an eternal unchanging God can at the same time be doing *new things*. We will be asking what is 'newness' anyway? What does it mean to *be new*? Or to be *made new*?

And how about that sometimes patronising phrase when we talk about someone being "a *new Christian*"? How can we cherish wisdom and experience without creating a status system where the insights of newcomers are diminished? And shouldn't we all try to be new Christians anyway, however long we've been at it? Ever new. Ever green. Ever open.

Because newness isn't the same as novelty. Newness doesn't have to mean a fad or a craze or a revolution, change for change's sake. A tree will likely spend its whole life in one small patch of forest, not moving or going anywhere but still forever new – growing, adapting, developing, listening to the world around it. A tree may be rooted to the same spot but it's always finding new ways to be. Even in decay a tree becomes something new for others, with fallen logs being an important part of the forest ecosystem. Embracing newness with God doesn't have to mean always chasing the latest trend. Newness with God is realising that openness to change and blossoming and refinement

are part of being faithful. The ever-new is blessedly all around us, and we can be ever-new in our relationship with the world. Each year is new again. Each spring brings newness. And each present moment is always new, hand given to you.

God always gives us new opportunities. New ways to see, to understand. God's love is new for you each day, it doesn't go stale. It's alive. It's simultaneously ancient and new.

The Spirit is moving and all things are being made new. Even you.

So when we come to God with the things that are broken, God replies: It's not written off, discarded, thrown aside, irredeemable. It can be made new.

All things can be made new.

*Each week of the five week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and prompts for thought.*

## New moves (1 May)

In our first reading Ananias has to get his head around the fact that God is doing something new with someone new. Ananias is a faithful follower, but he's thrown. This isn't how things are meant to go, has someone given him the wrong script?

The thing is, when we talk about 'following' God it implies that God is *going somewhere*. It is, after all, hard to follow someone who is standing still. We are part of an eternal cosmic dance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's always been the same dance, but from time to time God throws in some new moves, keeping us on our toes. So Ananias, it's time to throw some shapes.

### 1. Acts 9: 10-20

1. **Ananias you're not going to believe this...** Ananias had to be open to the new thing God was showing him.

### 2. Psalm 30

2. **There will be dancing.** From the pit to the dance floor, from the depths to the heights — God is doing something new...

### 3. Jeremiah 29: 10-14

3. **Listening out for the rhythm of the universe.**

Picking out the melody, working out the harmony, feeling the beat — seeking God.

### 4. John 21: 1-6

4. **Trying the other side of the boat.** Sometimes it's good to shake things up, to go to the other side of the boat and see what we'll find.

### 5. John 21: 7-14

5. **Breakfast on the beach.** Every time we start another day and eat another meal, every time we break our fast with Jesus, we are starting something new...

### 6. John 21:15-19

6. **Follow me.** A new calling and a new start for Peter.

### 7. Matthew 9: 14-17

7. **New wineskins, new shoes, new moves.** Something new is happening, let's get ready.

## From little details to big canvases (8 May)

Newness with God occurs from the cosmic to the molecular. New things are happening chemically, biologically, materially and energetically all the time. Under our feet, through the air, and between the stars. In our lives God is working new things at every level too, from the small details to the big canvases, from the moments too subtle to notice to the ones too big to ignore.

God is making all things new.

### 1. Acts 9: 36-43

1. **New clothes.** Let's focus on a little detail: the pile of clothes Tabitha had been making. It says she was devoted to good works and charity. Who were these clothes for? What would have happened to the clothes next, where would she have taken them in her new life with a new story to tell?

### 2. John 10: 22-30

### 3. Isaiah 43: 14-21

2. **I'm doing something new, considering the big picture.** Jesus was not necessarily the messiah that people were expecting and his project was bigger than they could imagine. What if Jesus isn't the messiah we sometimes expect him to be? And what if his project is still bigger than we can understand even now, 2,000 odd years later?

### 4. Psalm 8

### 5. Colossians 1: 15-20

3. **God is about to do a new thing.** Thinking of verse 19, how do we perceive when something new is springing forth?

### 6. Psalm 33

### 7. Lamentations 3: 19-24

4. **Looking up and looking down.** The wonders of heaven and the wonders of the human heart.

5. **In him all things hold together.** The ever-ancient and ever-new, the timeless and timely are all connected in Christ.

6. **Singing new songs!** God cares more for new songs than old war horses.

7. **In our big canvases of despair God can paint with hope.** In the unfolding cosmic drama of eternity God makes time for new mercies every morning.

## New Heaven, New Earth, New Vision (15 May)

The Earth is new and so is Heaven. They are ancient, and being made new, and already new... This week we consider the contradictions of time and the mind-bending physics of God's Grace...

1. Acts 11: 1-18
  2. Psalm 148
  3. Revelation 21: 1-6
  4. John 13: 31-35
  5. Luke 23: 39-43
  6. Genesis 1: 1-3
  7. 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21
1. **Who are we to hinder God?**
  2. **The ever-new praise of an ever ancient-creation!** Each present moment is always new.
  3. **"See, I am making all things new."** Reflecting on God's unique perspective as Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, outside of our conception of time.
  4. **A new commandment?** What's new about this commandment?
  5. **Jesus remembers us.** In this moment, amongst the countless that constitute reality, you are seen, known, remembered.
  6. **Out of the formless void comes light and shape and colour.** A multi-sensory odyssey begins.
  7. **The new is here!** The ongoing work of being a new creation.

## Open to the new (22 May)

This week we begin by thinking about how we can be like Lydia. What can we learn from the example of this faithful, generous, openhearted woman? We then continue think more broadly about what it means to be open, receptive, and responsive; paying attention to God.

1. Acts 16: 9-15
  2. Psalm 67
  3. Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5
  4. John 14: 15-31
  5. Psalm 105: 1-4
  6. Mark 5: 24b-34
  7. John 5: 1-9
1. **Like Lydia — open to something new.** Lydia was open to learning something new from somebody new. Are we?
  2. **Open to grace.** A timeless blessing speaking of God's graciousness. In our first reading, Lydia was both a *recipient of* and a *means of* graciousness.
  3. **By the river.** Here we have a striking vision of the River of Life and in our Acts reading Lydia was by a river when she met Paul. In a sense all rivers are rivers of life full of vibrant biodiversity. Reflecting on sitting by the rivers of God's grace, where the life is.
  4. **Engaged and eager.** The Bible is full of eloquent speakers, poets and singers but it is also full of faithful, engaged listeners like Lydia and the wrapt disciples in this reading.
  5. **Taking time to pray.** Considering what it means to take time to seek God.
  6. **Faithful and determined.** Think of the determination of the woman in this reading who literally hung on! Reflecting on determination and faith, like Lydia prevailing on the apostles.
  7. **Going for it.** The man in this encounter seized the mat and Lydia seized the moment. What does it mean day by day to be open to the new with God?

## Ever new (29 May)

Our gracious God tends to us each day, tending likewise to creation — leading us into new life together.

1. **Acts 16: 16-24**
  1. **A whole new way of being.** Paul's gang are causing a stir...
  2. **Tending to one another.** The relationship between the jailer and jailed is transformed and the tension dissipates. They are able now to tend to one another. Something new is happening.
  3. **Light dawns for the righteous...** The life-giving light from the sky is ancient but new for us each day — in the same way that the Psalms are ancient and yet new to us every day. Each day and each reading something new dawns.
  4. **Wrestling till dawn.** Sometimes our new name, our new identity, our new belonging takes a long confusing slog...
  5. **Tending to the sheep.** The pivotal moment of young David's life and where is he? Away from the action... Picture the scene: out on a hillside chasing after sheep, skimming stones, and singing songs. God is doing something new and needs somebody new.
2. **Acts 16: 25-34**
3. **Psalm 97**
4. **Genesis 32: 22-32**
5. **Samuel 16: 1-13**
6. **John 17: 20-26**
7. **Revelation 22: 16-17**
  6. **And I in them.** Together.
  7. **Let everyone who is thirsty come.** Join the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, ever new...