

Good morning, everyone,

My name is Carmel McCarthy. I have been attending St Carthage's for well over 50 years. My husband Mark and I live in Heidelberg and were married here. We were the first of many weddings by Michael Elligate in this church. Our children were married here and our grandchildren baptised here. So you can see my connection is very deep.

In this time, I have prepared many morning teas, made wonderful friendships in the Women's Spirituality Group and currently meet through Zoom for Meditation on Wednesdays at 5.30. Anyone is welcome to join us. The group has helped in my response to the readings of today.

I must admit that the readings raised some confusion for me, but discussion and consideration eased that for me.

Commented [MM1]: Ot

The reading from Isaiah has much to celebrate, especially at our beautiful time of Christmas. However, as always there is a sad connection with our world when we see the devastation in Lebanon today. I have some problem with Isaiah writing that "vengeance is coming"...I think there has been enough vengeance in our world.

However, our discussion covered Vengeance and we considered that this word referred to a just God and all the joy and good that will come.

He says that this time will "strengthen all weary hands." Prayerfulness and hopefulness should be intrinsic to this time.

It is a time of hope "Sorrow and lament will be ended." We need to recognise the constancy of God with us.

James speaks of our need for patience and hope in God. It is all we have.

In Matthew's Gospel, John sends a message from prison asking if Jesus is the One. Jesus answers saying to look at his works. Why didn't he say "yes" to his cousin like many things in readings. My colleagues pointed out that Jesus had a different way of teaching.

Some scholars say we are the blessed to be the least of the Kingdom of Heaven, because we do not lose faith in God.

In the words of the Monks at Cluny "We dare to Hope".