

## A creative journey - writing for 'Roots'

It is surprising how you come across some of the most enriching and rewarding experiences in your life. I never imagined that one of these would be through writing for 'Roots' Magazine, to which I have been contributing for the last few years. 'Roots' is a worship resource following the Revised Common Lectionary. Each magazine issue covers two months and the material, with added content is also available online via [www.rootsforchurches.com](http://www.rootsforchurches.com).

When I was first invited to a writers' conference (a whole separate story, which in retrospect seems to amount to a kind of calling!), I thought it would be a conference of the 'learning how to /workshop' variety. It came as a shock when I was immediately allocated the weeks I would contribute to. My immediate reaction was 'What me?'. However, after prayer and studying the Bible passages with the other writers and editors, it soon became clear that this was the start of a journey of discovery. Any contribution I made would be far outweighed by the sheer joy of learning and creating. Everyone in the group contributed in an open and supportive way, throwing in ideas for anyone to use in their writing.

The first conferences I attended were in Leeds, and contributors were from different backgrounds, areas and denominations, but all with a common aim to encourage each other and to produce relevant material, rooted in scripture and in everyday experience. More recently conferences have been mostly on 'Zoom'. Initially I thought that this might mean less easy interaction, but there was the same supportive, positive atmosphere and commitment. The varied experiences of the group help to prepare material suitable for small rural places of worship as well as for large congregations; and for those with few resources and those with advanced technical resources.

All this has meant that I have been pushed well outside my comfort zone, to find up-to-the-minute examples and new ideas. After each conference there is a period of a few weeks before the material is due, so I allow plenty of time for writing in order to really enjoy the work. As an artist, I have been able to contribute some of my own work to be used in the material. I spend some time reflecting on the readings, and this sometimes leads into painting one of my favourite art forms, the mandala. If it seems suitable, I submit it as a starting point for worship, or as a basis for a guided or quiet meditation during worship. Making suggestions for craft and worship activities really acts to get the creative juices to work. I have been led to work on new ideas which I have seldom tried before, such as monologues, poems, or dramas.

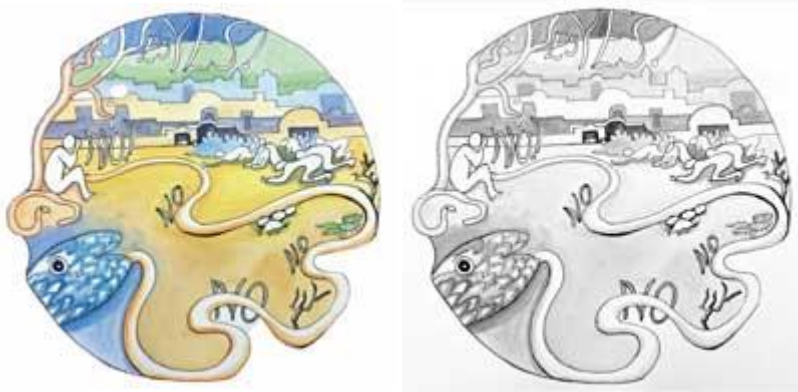
The following is part of a poem I wrote to introduce a reading from Jonah. It was written to present the reading, in which Jonah finally goes reluctantly to Nineveh. The purpose of the poem is to fill in the 'back story', before the reading begins. These are the first few lines:

Well, Jonah hated Nineveh, where God wanted him to go.  
He said ' No, Lord, send me elsewhere,  
I'm not going 'No, Lord, No!'  
But the day was wild and stormy,  
and he fell into the sea,  
where a big fish swallowed Jonah,  
(fish for dinner, man for tea!) .....

If you want to know what happens next see the [All age act of worship for Epiphany 3](#) in the Jan/Feb 2024 issue.

For the same week's material I painted a mandala as a background for the reading for the day. It shows Jonah's forward journey, from the fish to his finally accepting God's call and the result. A black and

white version, suitable for printing, was offered as part of a worship activity, where people could write their own thoughts and ideas.



There needs to be plenty of material for lay people in Roots, as increasingly they have a role to play in leading worship. My own worship leading has been enriched by the 'Roots' experience and I find the material invaluable. I am proud to have a small part in helping with this. When I was younger, I prayed that any creative talents and interests I had might find expression in my faith and vice versa. Through my creative work for 'Roots' and my involvement with 'Artserve', and in helping as a worship leader, this has become a reality.

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(A version of this article was first published in the Spring 2024 issue of the [ArtServe members' magazine](#). We are grateful to [Artserve](#) for giving Roots permission to reproduce it.)