

TOGETHER PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S FUTURE

The Other Side Awaits



JOURNEY WITH US AS WE MOVE FROM SPECTATORS TO PARTICIPANTS IN GOD'S UNFOLDING STORY

2 - 23 August 2026

Across Scripture, God repeatedly draws ordinary people into extraordinary work. God's movement has never been a solo performance, but a symphony of unlikely collaborators. So, this month's series invites us as the church to move from attendance to participation, from passive concern to shared responsibility and from isolated effort to communal discernment.

To participate in God's future is to notice where God is already at work and to ask the hard, holy questions: What is my section of the wall? Whose life must be protected? Which outsider is God asking us to trust? What violence must we interrupt? For our context as a society, these questions land with weight in a society marked by inequality, unemployment, violence, mistrust and deep fatigue.

It is easy, in such times, to become spectators, critics, or mere survivors. But Scripture does not give us the luxury of spectatorship. Scripture calls the church to become participants in repair. We are not building from scratch; we are joining a movement already in motion.

This month, we also honour the sacred memory of the more than 20,000 women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa also marks 50 years of the ordination of women into Presbytery, reminding that prophetic participation is never achieved overnight, nor carried by one generation alone. It has indeed been, in its own way, a glimpse of "the other side". Furthermore, fifty years is not a point of arrival; it is a marker on a much longer road.

The work is not finished. And so this theme invites all of us in our different capacities, from our diverse spaces, across our varied genders and sexualities, to hold firmly to God's call. Together, we are invited to participate in God's unfolding story for God's people, to the glory of God. In each week's text, God opens a future through cooperation rather than individual heroism. The question is not only, "What will God do?" but also, "How are we being invited to participate in what God is already doing?"

Together, the church practises hope by participating in God's future before that future is fully visible. We walk toward the other side together; not in certainty, but in faith; not as finished products, but as co-labourers with the God who is making all things new.

Week 1: Sunday 2 August	<i>Participants in rebuilding</i>	Rev Thabiso Mcinga
Week 2: Sunday 9 August	<i>Participants in hospitality</i>	Ncumisa Willie – Lay preacher (on trial)
Week 3: Sunday 16 August	<i>Participants in Justice</i>	Nqabomzi Besman – Lay preacher (on trial)
Week 4: Sunday 23 August	<i>Participants in courageous partnership</i>	Gcobisa Sigwilli – Lay preacher
Week 5: Sunday 30 August	<i>Participants in Life.</i>	Nomphele Kayi– Lay preacher (on trial)

Week 4 - Participants in courageous partnership

Worship Song: In the Secret: Shane and Shane https://youtu.be/I26PB9K-9lg?si=CTweqaCGTTGrklZj	Bible readings: Judges 4:1-24 Psalm 68:1-10 Philippians 1:3-11	Story of courageous partnership Deborah and Barak's story is a powerful witness to discernment and partnership. Deborah hears and speaks God's word; Barak responds but asks her to go with him; Jael's action also becomes part of the deliverance. The victory happens through cooperation rather than isolated heroism. This week brings us to ask what fears keep people from participating fully in God's work, and who helps us become courageous when we cannot move alone. The other side awaits, but the journey toward it is made together.
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HOME GROUPS AND CLASSES GUIDE:

1. Open in Worship and Prayer: this is to invite God into the meeting. For example, you can light a candle, sing together, or use a YouTube Hymn or song.
2. Open your Bibles and read the Bible verses for this week (take turns?) see below.
3. Reflect on the Bible verses and the reflection written by a Minister or Lay Preacher.
4. Connect with each other and take the reflection deeper by answering the Questions.
5. Works out: What have we learned that we can apply in our lives in this session? Keep each other accountable for promises made or important steps taken. Pray for and over each other (after taking prayer requests).

REFLECTION: WRITTEN BY Gcobisa Sigwilli – Lay preacher

The Bible has had many a partnership. We think of Moses, Aaron and Mirriam (Exodus 4:14-16); Jesus sent his disciples out two by two (Mark 6:7). Paul travelled and planted churches alongside Silas, Timothy, and Barnabas (whom he later parted ways with).

In Judges 4 Deborah seems to be the main character of the story. She had an important job as a prophetess which was one of judgement. Deborah seems to have two jobs that are at odds with each other, being a judge and being a prophet. She was responsible for judging Israel at that time. Being a judge means you need to have good listening skills, analyse information, make a judgement call and be unbiased. As a prophet you are God's vessel, you deliver the message as it is and should the person not follow your instructions or message what happens to them is not up to you.

Judge 4 verse 1 tells us that *"After Ehud's death, the Israelites again did evil in the Lord's sight."* According to verse 2-3 the Lord turned them over to King Jabin of Hazor who had Sisera as the commander of his army. Sisera oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Psalms 68 speaks of what is to happen to godly people and wicked people. Psalms 68 verse 2 says *"Blow them away like smoke. Melt them like wax in fire. Let the wicked perish in the presence of God,"* and verse 3 says *"But let the godly rejoice. Let them be glad in God's presence. Let them be filled with joy."* Two extreme things are supposed to happen to the godly and the wicked, one involves unlimited joy and the other involves extreme suffering. Something akin to suffering for twenty years at the hands of Sisera.

The time of suffering the Israelites endured gives credence to Psalm verse 2. It is not the first time the Lord has punished his own people for their rebellion or evil doing (Numbers 14:26-35), but have you ever thought what it takes an all for an "all forgiving God" to reach that point where the best cause of action is to punish his people. It reminds me of when Abraham was trying to save Sodom and Gomora and he could not even find fifty down to ten people who were righteous (Genesis 18).

There is clearly no co-operation between the godly and the wicked unless the wicked were to repent. We are all familiar with the story of Saul who had a personal encounter with God at Damascus (Acts 9) and when he could not account for persecuting God's people he repented and went by the name Paul (an indication that when we change, we are born anew). You might not have a new name but in Christ you are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Barak has an important role in Judges 4 however he forfeits his role and place in “future” by being too scared to go deliver the message alone. Deborah tells him he will receive no honour and she will. He nevertheless agrees to these terms and condition. God’s plan for Barak was to give him honour but he lets the things of this world like fear, insecurity, self-doubt gets in the way of his destiny. It is not said why Barak had to be the one to spread the message when Deborah could have simply done it, but we see grace and opportunity collide to give a woman a chance to make history. We however cannot deny that these two were partners in spreading this message of change that was going to free the Israelites after twenty years.

Philippians 1 verse 5 to 6 says “*For you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ returns.*” In Philippians the issue of partnership rises once again showing that spreading the gospel is a collective responsibility. We are each given good work within us (whether it is to give a message, do a kind act, show humanity, love a neighbour, show up, be change) and sometimes we are simply not fulfilling our end of the burden. Are you a Barak meant for greater things, yet you shrink yourself or are a Deborah originally a messenger and ultimately the heroin by chance? Can you find someone to partner up with in your Christian journey?

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION

1. What is the good work in you and what are you doing to fulfil it?
2. What is preventing you from doing what God wants you to do?
3. Do you ever feel punished by God and if so how and for how long?
4. Can you form a courageous partnership with someone where you are the change you want to see?
5. Have you ever been given an instruction by God that you could not fulfil and what were your reasons?

DAILY MEMORY VERSE AND PRAYER

MONDAY

Memory Verse

"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." — **Psalm 34:14 (NIV)**

Prayer

Lord, make me a peacemaker who turns away from evil, pursues what is good, and reflects Your justice in every relationship. Amen.

TUESDAY

Memory Verse

"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." — **Psalm 34:18 (NIV)**

Prayer

Father, thank You for drawing near to the broken-hearted. Help me to be Your hands and feet by offering comfort, compassion, and hope to those who are hurting. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Memory Verse

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone." — **Romans 12:17 (NIV)**

Prayer

Jesus, teach me to respond to injustice without bitterness, choosing grace, integrity, and love even when it is difficult. Amen.

THURSDAY

Memory Verse

"Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good." — **Romans 12:21 (NIV)**

Prayer

Lord, fill me with Your Spirit so that goodness overcomes anger, forgiveness triumphs over resentment, and love defeats evil in my life. Amen.

FRIDAY

Memory Verse

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." — **Matthew 5:9 (NIV)**

Prayer

God, make me an agent of reconciliation, bringing peace, healing, and unity wherever You place me. Amen.

SATURDAY

Memory Verse

"Abigail acted quickly..." — **1 Samuel 25:18 (NIV)**

Prayer

Father, give me Abigail's wisdom to act with courage, humility, and discernment, using my influence to prevent harm and bring peace. Amen.

SUNDAY

Memory Verse

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." — **Matthew 5:6 (NIV)**

Prayer

Lord Jesus, create in me an unquenchable hunger for Your righteousness, so that my life reflects Your justice, mercy, and peace in the world. Amen.

KIDS AND TEENS

Week 4 - Participants in Courageous Partnership

Bible Readings: Judges 4:1–24; Psalm 68:1–10; Philippians 1:3–11

Welcome

Have you ever had to do something difficult, but it became easier because someone stood beside you or did it with you? God doesn't ask us to do His work alone. Throughout Scripture, God brings people together, each with different gifts and strengths. Today's story introduces us to Deborah and Barak, two very different people who partnered together courageously to do what God was calling them to do.

Read Together - Judges 4:1–24.

The Story for Younger Children

Israel was in trouble, and God's people needed help. Deborah was a prophet and leader who listened to God and encouraged Barak to lead Israel's army. Barak was hesitant, but Deborah agreed to go with him. Together, they faced the enemy, trusting God to help them. God used Deborah, Barak, and Jael, each in a different way, to bring freedom to His people.

Talk About It

- Why do you think Barak wanted Deborah to go with him?
- What did Deborah bring to the partnership?
- How did different people work together in the story?
- Why is it important that we don't try to do everything alone?

For younger children:

- Who helps you when you have to do something difficult?
- How can you help someone else be brave?

Family Activity

Better Together

Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to draw or write **one thing they are good at**.

Put all the papers together.

Talk about how everyone has different gifts. Some people are good at leading, some encouraging, some listening, some creating, some helping, and some praying.

- **What could we accomplish together that would be difficult to do alone?**

Bringing It Home

Deborah and Barak remind us that **courage doesn't always mean doing something by yourself.**

Sometimes courage means being willing to stand beside someone else.

Paul also reminds us in Philippians that the Christian life is something we share together. We encourage one another, pray for one another, and participate in God's work together.

God has given each of us different gifts, but we are not meant to work in isolation.

We need one another.

- **Who might God be asking us to partner with?**

Family Prayer

Dear God, Thank You that You don't ask us to do Your work alone. Thank You for the different gifts and strengths You have given each of us. Give us courage to step forward when You call us, and humility to ask for help when we need it. Help us to encourage one another, work together, and trust You. Show us how we can be partners in what You are already doing. Amen.

Family Challenge

This week, choose one way to practise **courageous partnership**:

- Encourage someone who is facing something difficult.
- Ask someone for help instead of trying to do everything yourself.
- Work together as a family to help someone.
- Thank someone for the gift they bring to your family or community.
- Pray together for someone who needs courage.

At the end of the week, ask:

- **Where did we see God working through people working together?**

Remember: We don't have to do God's work alone. God gives us one another.