

# Churned by God



Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on* Mark 1:14-20

**P**oppy seeds can lie dormant for years with no one even knowing they are there. When the ground is churned up, they push down their roots and grow. It's a strong theme for Remembrance Sunday, and it also gives us a way to look at what is happening in today's Gospel. John the Baptist has been arrested – it is the end of his ministry and almost the end of his life; his arrest is a ground-churning event that spurs into growth a new season for Jesus, as he begins to proclaim the good news of God. This proclamation is the first thing we hear him say in Mark's Gospel. As Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee the ground is churned up for Simon and Andrew, who can have no idea that everything is about to change for them, as they leave their nets and their father and follow Jesus. These men, like us, are called into relationship with Jesus. The work of the kingdom, and the heart of any vocation, is not about being alone but about being in community, centred on Jesus Christ. They respond with a freshness and clarity that will not always characterise their discipleship – the rest of the Gospel repeatedly shows their failings and lack of understanding. But this moment matters more – for this is when their lives take root in Christ and they begin to bloom.

May our lives also be so churned by God that we too may grow and flourish. 🌱

**Eternal God, who calls us daily to follow you. May we not fear when our lives are disturbed, but may we push down our roots into the ground of your love, and grow strong in response to your grace. Amen.**

## Remembrance Sunday

by Lee Tulfer

"Tell me what you sing, and I will tell you what you believe," someone wise once said. So much of our faith is shaped by the songs and hymns we sing, and this is in turn shaped by the experiences of their writers.

Timothy Rees, later Bishop of Llandaff, was a chaplain during the First World War, seeing action at the ill-fated campaign in Gallipoli and on the Somme. His poetry often

focuses on the themes of human violence, and the violence that was done to Christ at the crucifixion. However, in his most enduring hymn, "God is Love, Let Heav'n Adore Him", he finds hope and comfort in the idea that God's heart breaks with ours when we mourn – an unfamiliar idea at the time, but one which resonated with many, grieving for lost loves and futures.

Ultimately, strife and death will not triumph against the love of God. 🌱

**“ I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.”**

Philippians 1:3-4

## Walking with Rosie

### Leaving a mark

by Gillian Cooper

Rosie and I are visiting my old haunts, staying in a Peak District cottage and catching up with Sheffield friends. There are new walks, some featuring sheep and mud, others on wide city streets with all their noise and activity. On balance Rosie prefers the city – there is more chance of finding something edible on city pavements than in country lanes.

We are warmly welcomed into the cathedral, where I used to work. Rosie is introduced to friends who well remember Poppy. There is sadness in the absence of former colleagues, but also joy in seeing continuing work and worship. I leave knowing that here, somehow, I played a small part in the work of God's kingdom. Perhaps, I think, I have left a little mark behind, some small memory in the air and the stones, something that remains of me in this place to which God once called me. 🌱