

Testimonies

Stories of meeting the Blossom-Maker

In Autumn 2014, the Sanctuary's window was transformed into a beautiful swirling scene, designed to celebrate the Blossom-Maker and his creative, restorative power – and to share his story with passers-by. The Blossom-Maker is an allegorical tale written for all ages by Liz Baddaley, Co-founder of the Sanctuary, writer and children's author, kindly shared with us for a short season during the Ilkley Literature Festival. It's a poetic story inspired by the wonderful imagery of Isaiah 61 and by God's beauty – find out more about the story and our special story window [here](#).



In response to the window display, and various times of prayer and worship celebrating the redemptive beauty of Jesus, several members of the Sanctuary's community wrote their own mini stories of meeting the Blossom-Maker. Each one is different, it's style unique and personal – but they all testify to the amazing saving power of Christ, which transforms us and our lives again and again. We hope you enjoy reading them, and that as you do so, you too are inspired to reflect on your own experience of seeing the Blossom-Maker bring beauty into your life.

A life of contrast.

An old life defined by grey; full of “success” and “achievement” but feeling meaningless; an underlying dull ache, droning and rumbling and longing for more; an emptiness, gaping wide and hollow.

But then in a moment of choosing more, colour flashes in – swamping the grey – bringing freedom, hope and belonging; filling the emptiness with depth and warmth; knowing I'm loved, treasured, found – forever.

A new life defined by promise; where even the small patches of grey and weather-beaten brown that remain (just for now) cannot overcome the vibrancy, beauty and adventure of a life in Christ.

She'd always known about the Blossom-Maker. But then she found him.

She followed his path of petals, sometimes an easy trail at others a slowed down journey as she sought out the next petal.

His petals were gifts, and he showed her how to use them to make gifts for others.

In time she asked the Blossom-Maker for the gift of her own little blossom tree.

Some of her petals were damaged but she knew that he could create beauty from them. She waited and waited. In her wait she followed the petals but now they breathed hope and love and patience.

And the Blossom-Maker watched, as he wove in the dark of her womb, the blossom which he delicately repaired and from which he created all the inner parts of a new little blossom tree. A gift he'd planned long ago.

My family took me to the Blossom-Maker's garden and danced with me there...

They shared his beauty, created from the ashes of their normal lives and let me learn of his transforming love. I accepted his blossom with childlike trust.

Have I always visited the Blossom-Maker's garden? No. I made my own garden, folded my own origami blossom from paper which reflected his beauty.

Even when I did not visit him his blossom still flowered and I was still loved.

But now when I sit in the living room of my life there is always a branch of blossom to look at when the ashes of this world are too much to bear.



"The winter is over; the rains have stopped;

In the countryside the flowers are in bloom....

Figs are beginning to ripen; the air is fragrant with blossoming vines" (Song of Songs)

This poem from the Bible really sums up life right now, the flowers are in bloom through knowing our creator, through walking with him through all of life's ups and downs and learning to trust him and his plans for us.

We owe everything to him – our marriage, our children, our home, our jobs, our financial stability and our health. Like a broken mosaic he has pulled our lives together and created a picture we could never have imagined ourselves.

We would write down all he has done for us since we started to follow him eight years ago but would you believe us? Would you believe that He can heal deep wounds from the past? Yes whatever those wounds he can heal them? Would you believe he can bless you with children against all odds? Would you believe that he can bless you financially? Would you believe he can bring the right people into your life at the right time? Would you believe he can get that involved in the details of your life?

Our challenge is to trust him no matter what life throws at us and to reach into his peace and love no matter what darkness threatens to over whelm us.

Life is not easy and we have not found it to be so. There may well be pain in the night just as there has been for us, but with Jesus and through the love of his church there is joy in the morning.

Our prayer for anyone who reads this is that you can take some time to look for him in your life. He is waiting for you.

Our three year old daughter said this year that 'God is close, but invisible and a teeny bit in heaven'. For us, she hit the nail on the head. Many of us believe in a God up there, away from us, looking down, far removed from us. However, our experience is that through Jesus he is active in the here and now. Personally, in our hearts, helping us forgive, accept his forgiveness and changing situations all around us and collectively, in his church and our communities.



Our daughter also told us this year 'Gods heart is like a dock leaf, making everything better' and she asked us to pray that God would increase the number of dock leaves growing all over the world. When we look at the news today we know we need him and we know we need him to help us be a part of the healing process. We pray for everyone who knows him to draw closer and closer to Jesus and for all those who don't, that today will be the day you meet the person of Jesus, your creator and closest friend.

I grew up by the sea and kinda took it for granted.

But it felt like God's love to me. Limitless and constant.

People say I would love to live by the sea; laying on the beach in the sunshine – feeling comfortable and relaxed.

But it was in the middle of the night, when there was a storm that God spoke to me most.

It consumed my senses.

It reminded me of God's power, his awesome creation he has gifted to us, his infinite love and that he is all powerful.

"In my distress I prayed to you and you recued me." (Psalm 18)

When I feel I'm being swallowed up and consumed by flooding, 'stuff' is too much for me. God you hear my cry and answer my prayer.

"You reached down from on high and drew me out of deep water, because you delighted in me" (Psalm 18 again).

I ran a long way on the mixed fuel of fear, shame, rejection and loneliness. I ran fast and I ran hard. I ran too fast for any blossom to land on me.

I grinned as I climbed higher and higher and screamed as I plummeted.

At the top of a mountain I was invincible, the view seemed breath-taking but each time like a vapour that mountain disappeared from under me.

I fell fast, in a blur, eyes watering and crash, rock bottom.

My feet would barely touch the valley before setting off again in search of another mountain top that didn't really exist.

I ran for 27 years.

But then, running on empty, I am trapped.

My enemies surround me, darkness closes in - "you fool, you're disgusting, you have no one, you have no future, you have no hope, you are worthless, kill yourself..."

Ready to take what never belonged to me. In desperation I cry out loud...

"Jesus if you are real I need you now"

Silence - He was there all the time - the enemies are gone.

The Blossom Maker draws near, he doesn't stay long, just long enough. Shows me a life built on a rock, overflowing with love, in the direction of hope.

Things had changed. Forever.