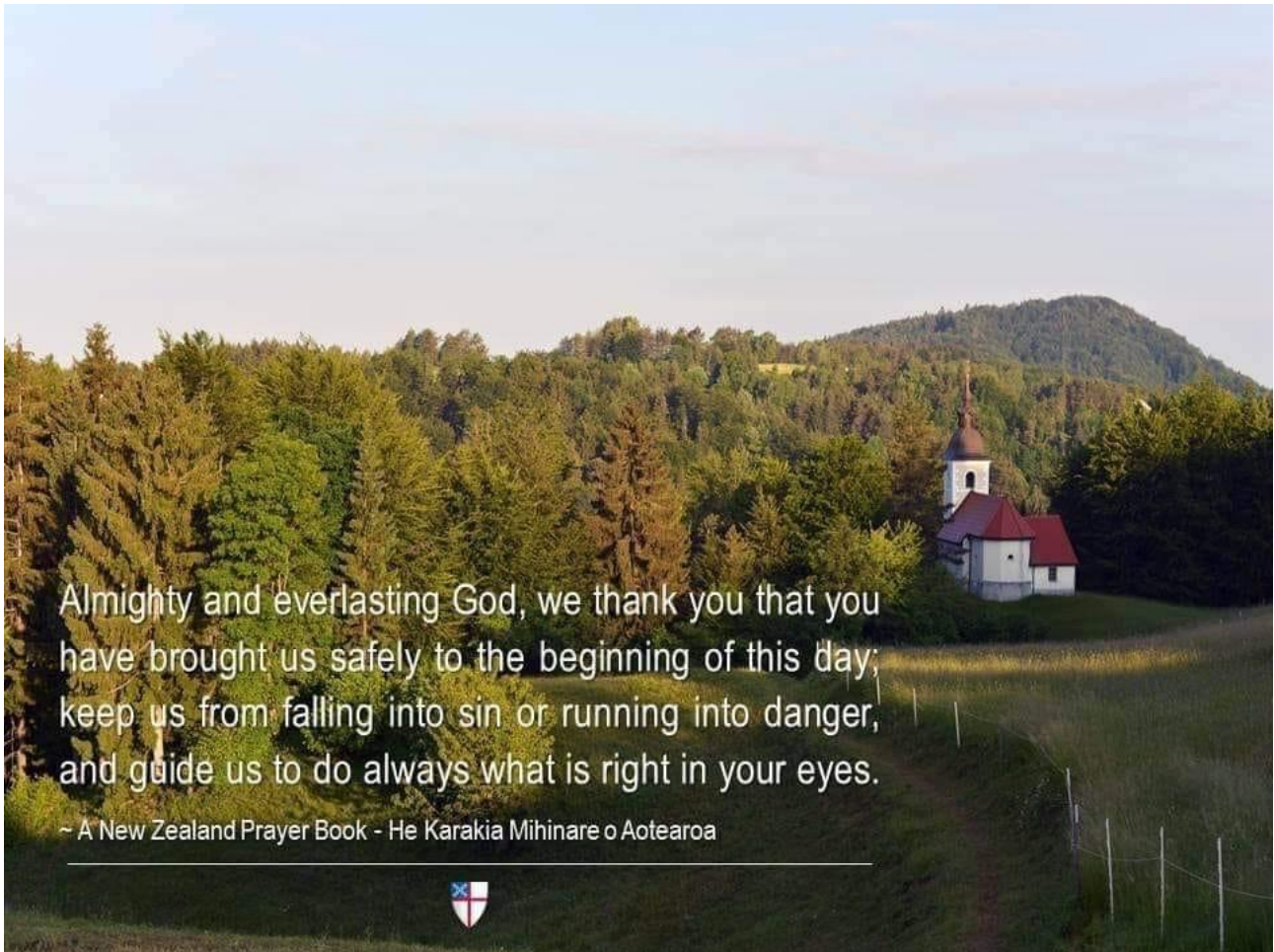


Speaking to the soul



God's purposes

And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. Philippians 1:12–13

My chief memory of prison visits is the huge bunches of keys and the slamming of doors and I am sure that would have been just the same in Paul's day. The lack of liberty must be terrible, and we have every reason to think that Paul's years of incarceration would have been a degrading

experience. But Paul has no time for moaning! He reflects that his time in prison has actually enabled the good news of Jesus to be spread.

Paul's various times in prison must have been desperately hard to bear, but he consistently focused on the fact that God had brought blessing through these times. This reminds me of Joseph's experience in the Old Testament. His brothers hated him so much that they intended to murder him, but they eventually decided to sell him to some passing traders. Joseph was taken to Egypt where his ability to interpret dreams finally led him to become one of the leaders of the land during a time of famine. In one of the most dramatic moments of the Bible, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt in search of food and the official that they met was none other than Joseph himself. He summed up what had happened by saying this: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so that I could save the lives of many people" (Genesis 50:20). Joseph wasn't saying that what they had done was acceptable. They had clearly acted in a terrible way. But their actions hadn't stood in the way of God's purposes.

We all face tragedies, illnesses and setbacks in life. But as we trust ourselves to God he is able to keep working miraculously in us as we commit ourselves to him.

QUESTION

Can you think of a bad experience in your life that God turned into something good?

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you that you are at work in my life even when times are hard. Amen