

## QUESTION

- What do you think it was like, for Jesus in the bible story, or for the families in the other stories to be touched and then betrayed?

## TOUCH SENSATIONS OF THE DESERT

As Jesus spent time in the desert, he must have been very aware of the texture and shape of his surroundings. The ground would be hard under his feet and the rocks and stones sharp and gritty to his fingers. Vegetation would be coarse and dry and he would feel the touch of both heat and cold and night and day came and went. Perhaps he encountered the thorns that would later be his crown, the touch of dust and flies that he would be able to do nothing about at his crucifixion.

## SOME QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

- What touch experiences would he have noticed during his time in the desert and what might they have meant to him in his own ministry?
- Jesus was a carpenter, working with his hands, what might this have taught him about touch?
- What might Jesus have learned about the need for human touch and especially the needs of those who were untouchable?

## PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Lord,  
You knew the touch of love.  
You knew the touch of friendship  
You endured the kiss of betrayal  
You endured the crown of thorns.  
Help us to touch others with your love  
Help us to touch others with your friendship  
Help us to heal wounded hearts  
Help us to heal the scars and hurts  
For your name's sake.  
Amen

## Dunbarney and Forgandenny Parish Church

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## LENT 2009: Sense Making Faith Week 4 - Journey into Touching

We are social beings who need to relate to others. For many people, loneliness or isolation is as bad as being ill, hungry or thirsty. Being out of contact with others can be hard to bear.

Reaching out and touching others is not only a profoundly important part of our human experience it is also part of our spirituality. We share and show love by touching. We comfort and console by touching. We experience closeness with our parents, children, siblings, other family members and friends when we embrace. Touch experiences can bring intense feelings of mutual love, peace and joy.



Christian healing is accompanied by the laying on of hands, as Jesus did. At important moments in our Christian journey, such as baptism, marriage and at our death, we can be ritually touched in blessing or forgiveness and know that God is with us. For many Christians these moments are both precious and memorable and give them a sense of worth and dignity before God.



As Isaiah reminds us 'We are the clay, you are our potter, we are all the work of your hand' (Isaiah 64.8). In Lent this idea of our taking our being from God, being loved by God and given a purpose to accomplish as Christians before we die, is an important part of the Lenten journey and indeed our spiritual journey as a whole.

## ACTIVITY



Find some plasticine and use it to make a model. Concentrate on the way your fingers touch the materials and how you have to use touch to get the effects you want.

- What does it feel like to do this activity?
- What does it teach you about the

experience of touch?

There are some people who cannot bear to be touched, perhaps because of abuse or a medical condition. How can we 'reach out' to such people in a way that does not make things worse?

## A STORY

A woman with AIDS came into a hospital for a doctor's appointment. The illness had affected her brain so that she was unable to talk or write. A clerical worker sat down with her and tried to get her details for the hospital's record, but it wasn't possible. The sick woman took an orange out of her pocket and laboriously peeled it with shaking hands, then shared it with the clerical worker. They sat in the hospital waiting room and shared it together. Later, one of the other hospital workers told the clerical worker that she would not have touched the fruit, knowing that the woman had AIDS. A week later, the sick woman died of her disease.

We all have an idea of the kinds of thing we would not like to touch and sometimes these are sensible precautions, protecting us from danger or disease, but we can also have misconceptions about touch, thinking that we can be harmed where there is no risk at all.

Moreover, we most often than not do not stop to think what it is like to become 'untouchable' - to have people deliberately keep from touching you because they think you will give them a disease or harm them in some other way. Jesus was remarkable in that he touched all kinds of untouchable people in his ministry, not only

healing them of their disease, but also making them touchable again, and so giving them back the opportunities we all need for love, care and intimacy.

## SOME QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

- Why did the sick woman share her food with the clerical worker?
- What kinds of thing (or person) would you find it difficult to touch and why?
- What kinds of touch would help you if you were ill? What kinds of touch might not?

**Read Mark 14:43-50**

## ACTIVITY

Consider these stories:

During the Second World War, a Dutch Christian family were hiding their Jewish friends in their house. One day, another trusted friend came into the house and greeted all the Jews cordially, shaking the men's hands and kissing the children. Later the same day, the friend returned with the police, and the Jews and the Christians were all arrested.

A woman kissed her husband and children and went to work. Her office closed early that day and she came home unexpectedly. Looking through the kitchen window she saw her husband holding hands with and kissing her best friend.

Two boys were playing together and promised to be friends forever. To seal their pact they hugged and then swapped T shirts which they wore as often as they could to show their friendship. Later on they quarrelled and didn't see each other for a while. One of the boys got up one morning and found his T shirt torn and stuffed back through his letter box.

