

## Faith in the Future



Last week a friend and I planted two apple trees in a community orchard at a local park. I grafted them myself two years ago, and since then they had lived in pots in my garden. Now, however, they had grown tall enough for planting out, although it will probably be a few years before they bear any fruit.

It felt good to be doing something for the future, looking forward to a time when people will be able to enjoy picking ripe apples from those trees. I felt we were acting in faith and in hope as we firmed the ground

around them and said a word of blessing over them. As we walked away the rain was beginning to fall, watering the newly planted saplings like a blessing from heaven, too.

I found myself thinking of a story in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 32, about the prophet buying a field at a place called Anathoth, although he knew that soon his land would be conquered by the Babylonians and many of its people taken into exile. That, too, was an act of faith and hope. The deeds to the field were sealed up carefully so they would be preserved until the time when the Jews were able to return. Jeremiah declared, “The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, has said that houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.”

Some of us at the moment may feel a little as if we are going into exile, if only to our own homes. On Sundays we may feel we are in an alien land if we are unable to attend church services as usual, even if it is only for a few weeks or months, unlike the Jews, whose time of exile was to go on for decades. The story of Jeremiah’s purchase of the field, and his words of faith and hope for the future, offer encouragement to us all. God’s people will return.

**A prayer:** *Heavenly Father, I thank you that there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can ever separate me from your love. I think of others who may be feeling isolated at this time. Grant to us the assurance that nothing can ever isolate us from your presence. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

**Rev. John Barnett, March 2020**