

The reading today tells of direct communication between God and Abraham.

This is not the first time. When Abraham was 75 yrs God asked him to 'up sticks', leave the family home, take his household, his nephew Lot and the animals and travel far away to Canaan. Abraham experienced many difficulties, which are worth reading about in Genesis ch 12 – 16.

When we hear of Abraham now in ch 17 he is 99 and must have been very surprised by God's promise that he would be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. However, God started by saying 'Walk before me and be blameless'. Perhaps this encouraged Abraham to be committed to God? Abraham must have been puzzled as to how God would do this, as Sarah his wife had no children.

What was it in Abraham that God saw? He chose Abraham for such greatness. There was direct communication between them and Abraham obeyed God, even leaving the area he called home, travelling to a strange land, facing many hardships, and was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac when God asked him to.

When we are confirmed the Bishop says words from the prophet Isaiah 'I called you by name, you are mine'. We are confirming our commitment to God, but what does God see in us?

Abraham was very ancient but God had much for him to do.

Many of us in our church are elderly. How are we seen by our community? Our neighbours? The Western world? What do visitors or new church members see?

You may remember a visiting vicar in the interregnum, who said he looked out on a sea of grey hair.

Recently I read that the traditional C of E is 'Saga at prayer'.

Why does this seem so derogatory? We should be at prayer. That is a huge part of our Christian life.

God had great love and plans for Abraham and Sarah. They were not 'past it' or seen as useless or a nuisance. God has plans for us. He does not see the wrinkles or aching joints as problems so neither should we.

God waited many years before giving this promise to Abraham. I wonder why?

My hope is that we can see ourselves as God sees us. There is much we can do to spread God's word. Our neighbours know we go to church, so invite them to one of our functions, activities or parish lunch. Harvest meal is soon - an ideal opportunity.

Perhaps, too we can make sure our Bible is in evidence so our family, grandchildren or visitors see it and we can talk about the stories or the passage we are reading.

Surely old age and the 'World's' view of the elderly cannot mean we are of no further use as Christians. Let's take courage from Abraham and all that God saw in him.