



Anna Sims

Link Letter no. 24 | June 2022



Location: Peru



What I do: Supporting female, English-speaking inmates and ex-offenders in Lima through prison ministry Walking in Liberty.

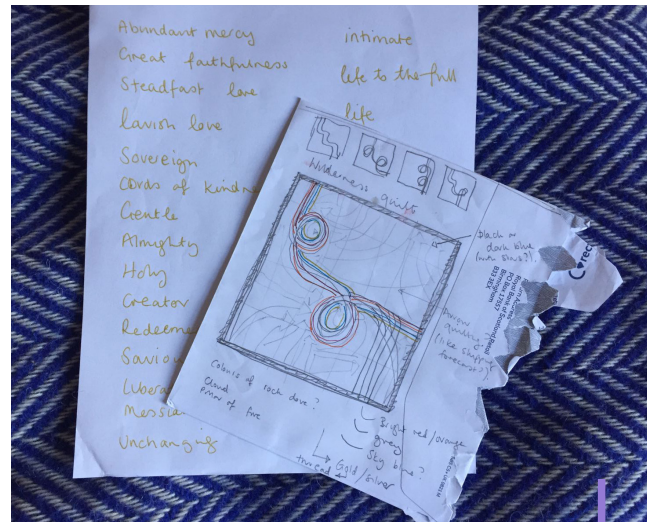
Dear friends,

I love the Lord, he heard my voice,
He heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me
I call upon his name.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave
When sorrow overcame my soul
I cried "O Lord please save!"

You delivered my soul from death
my eyes from tears
my feet from stumbling Lord
That I may walk before you Lord my God
as long as I shall live

...Be at rest O my soul
For the Lord has been good to you

From the song "Be at rest (Psalm 116)" by Matt Searles



Initial notes for my "Wilderness Quilt".

During a time of reflection over Easter, I sat down and for the first time read through my notes from the last 18 months. Unable to find the words or energy to write, I had stopped journaling at the beginning of the pandemic. However, I had collated in a folder the scraps of paper with quotes scrawled on, sheets with notes from sermons, books and podcasts, handouts from online courses and retreats, notes from my debrief, counselling sessions and CMS meetings. It was a lot to go through. Unordered, sometimes illegible, I sifted through backs of envelopes and loose sheets covered in doodles, sketches, bullet points and lists. It was initially a sobering read. I knew that I had been struggling, but seeing the written fragments I was shocked at what a dark pit I had been in. I was also struck with an overwhelming sense of thankfulness, that God had brought me out of that place and had gently and faithfully provided and cared for me throughout this whole period.

In January, I was at a retreat when the person leading it asked "What does your wilderness look like? Can you draw it?". I hadn't identified what I was going through as a "wilderness moment" but, in a moment of clarity, I was able to do an initial sketch of my experience in the form of a patchwork quilt. I have been continuing to work on the still unfinished quilt ever since and have seen my ideas develop,

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



as I continue to emerge from my “wilderness moment”. It started with some seemingly aimless meanderings around the desert, the twists and turns of my recovery and the feelings of lack of purpose and direction that I had been particularly experiencing in the previous months. The more I thought about God’s goodness, leading and faithfulness during my life in general and this period in particular, the more I wanted to focus on that in the quilt and consider his stability, sovereignty, constancy and faithfulness, in contrast to my helplessness. So, I have designed one side featuring a curvy meandering route and on the other, letters spelling out some different attributes of God’s character. My “Wilderness Quilt” continues to be a work in progress.

At a recent thanksgiving day at Holy Trinity Platt, my sending church, Paul, the minister asked “How did the Israelites

come out of the wilderness with thanks?” (Deuteronomy 26:1-11) Part of the answer, according to him, is down to the story they told themselves, which was realistic and God-focused. This resonated with me.

As you may be aware, I have been on a time of extended leave, which ended at the beginning of May. I still don’t feel as if I’m out of the wilderness yet, but as I continue to emerge, not yet to a promised land but definitely a landscape that is less wildernessy, I am conscious that I want to do this “giving thanks”. So to do that, it is helpful to share a narrative that is realistic and God-focused. Like many of you reading this, I have found the last few years to be challenging, I have struggled with the losses, disappointment and disorientation. It has been a painful time. All to be expected in “the space between” but, as always, time spent in this space has also been rich in growth and refinement.

As I travel back to Lima at the end of June for a fortnight to maintain my visa status, I am unsure of what I will find when I arrive. There have been many changes in the past year as Peru emerges from the pandemic with a new president, government and set of issues causing unrest. Relationships have changed as friends have left Lima and dynamics with remaining friends have dramatically shifted. I need to be wise in managing expectations and cultural norms of myself and others with my current lower energy levels and lower capacity for people. I am hoping for clarity about the right way to move forward. But amid this uncertainty, I can be confident and reassured that the same God goes before me and will be with me, that he will never leave me or forsake me.

Please continue to pray for me as I adjust to my “new normal”, for the trip to Lima, subsequent meeting with CMS and the ongoing situation in Peru.

Thanks for your continuing support,

Anna x



Photos from top to bottom: Fabric for my “Wilderness Quilt”; A quilted wall hanging processing my time of isolation in lockdown; Bench at Lee Abbey; View of Lee Abbey.



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