

Perhaps it's daring to dream again  
after disappointment.  
Perhaps it's trusting that the Spirit  
still moves – in me, in us –  
even when the sky looks dark.

*(Look upward slightly.)*

Out of the ashes, Joel says, comes  
abundance.

Not the same as before  
– but still beautiful.

*(Pause, long silence.)*

And I find myself whispering – almost  
afraid to hope – maybe this is how  
resurrection begins: quietly, gently,  
in the broken ground of my own  
heart.

### Silent reflection ..

or encourage people to write their  
own version

### Wonderings

- I wonder where the rain of grace  
and love is falling in our world  
today.
- I wonder how the Spirit is  
speaking through those who have  
been ignored or silenced.
- I wonder what dreams and visions  
God is awakening in you, in us,  
right now.
- I wonder what it means to believe  
that even devastation can become  
sacred ground.

### Contributing to Sunday Worship

- As a group what thoughts and  
examples from your discussions  
do you want to share with the  
people who will be leading  
worship or preaching ?

- What pictures might accompany  
the reading of this passage?
- What pieces of music, sacred  
and secular might be appropriate?
- What might need including in  
the intercessions ?

### Reflective Action

Invite each person to write one word  
or phrase on a slip of paper:  
something in the world that feels  
"devoured by locusts," and, on  
the reverse side, a word of hope –  
something they long to see restored.  
Lay them together in a bowl.

### Closing Prayer

God of all creation,  
You water the parched earth  
and breathe life into weary souls.  
Pour out your Spirit on all flesh :  
on the broken, the fearful,  
the forgotten, the dreamers.  
Where we see only ashes,  
awaken new beginnings.  
Teach us to live as  
people of the rain :  
restoring, reconciling,  
renewing the earth.  
Amen.



[www.heartedge.org](http://www.heartedge.org)

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# HeartBeat

## Out of the Ashes

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> of October

Lectionary Reading:  
Joel 2:23–end

### Ice Breaker

Can you think of a time when  
something was destroyed or lost-  
in your life, your community,  
or in the world – and yet  
something unexpectedly good  
began to grow out of it?  
What helps you hold onto hope  
when things seem beyond repair?

### Opening Prayer

God of renewal,  
You promise rain after  
drought, hope after loss,  
and Spirit for all flesh.  
As we listen to your word,  
open our hearts to the places  
of devastation in our  
own lives and world.  
Teach us to see your Spirit at work  
in the ashes, sowing seeds of new  
life. Amen.

## Scripture Reading:

### Joel 2:23–end

Read the passage slowly, then pause for silence.

Invite someone else to read it again, perhaps from a different translation. Encourage people to notice a word, image, or phrase that stands out for them

After the second reading, sit in silence for a moment before sharing:

- What did you notice?
- What word or image spoke to your heart?

## Background and Context

The prophet Joel speaks into a landscape of devastation – crops destroyed, livelihoods ruined, people despairing.

But instead of offering blame, Joel offers a vision of restoration and inclusivity. The same God who seems absent in crisis now brings renewal:

- Rain for the dry earth
- Food for the hungry
- Spirit for all people

This isn't only a promise of recovery. It's a call to see how creation, humanity, and God are interconnected, and to recognise that new life often begins precisely where old systems have failed.

## Going Deeper into the passage

### What's Been Devoured?

Joel says, "I will repay you for the years the locust has eaten."

- What "locusts" have devoured hope or joy in our world – climate breakdown, war, inequality, isolation?
- Where do you see that same pattern of loss close to home – in your community, family, or church life?

## The Rain of Grace

Joel's "early and later rain" is a sign of grace that restores balance.

- What does "rain" look like in our time – where do you see signs of God's grace renewing what has been scorched?
- How can our communities become part of that rain?

## The Spirit on All Flesh

Joel envisions God's Spirit poured out on all – sons and daughters, old and young, free and enslaved.

- What might it look like for the Spirit to move through every kind of person in your community?
- Where do we still limit or control the Spirit's flow – in gender, class, race, or age?

## From Apocalypse to Awakening

Joel's apocalyptic language, the darkened sun and moon, can sound frightening, but it also reveals truth.

- What truths are being uncovered in our age of crisis – about power, privilege, or the planet?
- What old systems must fall for new life to rise?

## Out of the Ashes : Our Stories

Invite participants to share real examples of devastation and renewal:

### Examples:

**Local:** a closed church reopening for community use, flood recovery, post-pandemic neighbourliness.

**Global:** Hiroshima's peace memorials, Gaza's children planting gardens, or nature's regrowth after wildfires.

What do these stories reveal about the Spirit's quiet persistence?

## Connecting to Our Lives

Many of us have lived through seasons of fear, loss, and waiting – times when all we can do is hold on. Yet, Joel reminds us that life can emerge even from ruin. Hope, like rain, falls where the soil is broken open.

- What might it mean for you personally to believe that "the years the locust has eaten" can still bear fruit?
- What small actions could help renew hope in your community or the wider world?

## Group Reflection:

### Based on Joel 2:23–end

*(Reader stands or sits slightly apart.*

*Speak slowly, reflectively.*

*Allow space between sections for silence.*

*Use a soft, contemplative tone – not dramatic, but honest and human.)*

I sit here listening to Joel's words – rain after drought, life after loss – and something in me aches. Because I know what it feels like when the locusts come. Not the insects... but the quiet kind — the ones that eat away at joy. A broken relationship. An illness that never really heals. Dreams that dried up before they ever took root.

*(Pause. Lower voice slightly.)*

When everything fell apart, I remember thinking, this is it – there's nothing left to save. It felt like standing in a burnt field – the ground still warm from fire, no sound, no colour, no hope.

*(Pause.)*

And then, somehow... time kept moving. A friend turned up at my door. A small kindness, unexpected. Someone prayed for me when I couldn't pray for myself. And I began to notice... not much at first... but small green shoots breaking through the charred soil of my life. *(Let a silence fall, then resume with gentle warmth.)*

I don't know if I'd call it recovery... or grace. Maybe it's both. Maybe this is what Joel means when he says, "I will repay you for the years the locust has eaten." It's not that the pain disappears. It's that something new grows out of it – something that couldn't have grown before. *(Softer, more personal tone.)* I wonder what rain looks like for me now. Perhaps it's learning to forgive – myself, others, even God.