Sermon: **Do not be afraid – I am with you** (Isaiah 43.5a)

First day on a canal barge I had to navigate a long tunnel with no light, but I carried on as the guide book told me there was an end.

Sometimes life feels like that; is there really light at the end of the tunnel? TEXT.

NB text addresses a nation, Israel, not individuals as such. He was writing shortly after many from Israel had been sent into Exile; this occurred when people generally believed that gods ruled over geographic areas. Exile meant loss of Temple and homeland; did it also mean loss of their God? Isaiah was sure this was not the case. Isaiah was also sure that not only should the people worship only one God, but that there was only one God in existence to worship.

As a church we have been through hard times – locally, nationally. Churches have closed, national sexuality debates, combining the three churches. How bad were they? Did we get through?

Whilst TEXT not about individuals, it is not inapplicable.

Have you been through the deep waters of depression? Have you passed through the fires of crisis?

Did you get through? Was God in the mix? TEXT.

Note also that God does not say you will have no problems, there will be deep waters and raging fires, but that these will not overwhelm us.

Cockermouth floods of 2005, 2009, 2015. Churches involved. The community will not give up.

God brought Israel home. We will reach home - a place of safety, where we can be ourselves, where God is.