

# MORAVIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Devotional Notes

December 2012/ January 2013

## Theme: Following in Christ's Footprints

If you read these notes in December, we will just have begun a new church year with Advent Sunday. If you read them in January, we will just have begun a new calendar year and marked the beginning of 2013. Such turning points in our lives often make us reflect on what has passed over the past year or years, and often make new resolutions, have new goals or set ourselves new tasks for the year or years ahead. There will be other turning points also in our lives, which we only see more clearly as we look back. Sometimes things happen to us, we experience something different or even traumatic, we take on a different role or make a conscious or even unconscious step in a different direction, and then later we can identify this as a turning point, sometimes even a life-changing turning point in our lives.

This month we are going to look at a life-changing turning point in the life of Jesus and his followers. It was certainly a conscious decision on the part of Jesus, but his disciples and other followers simply went along with him, and it was only with hindsight that they could see where it led, how they responded and what it meant for the rest of their lives. **Please read Matthew 16:13-26.**

Caesarea Philippi is the furthest north that Jesus went. A mile or so further and Jesus would have crossed the border into the Roman Province of Syria, so in one sense it was always going to be a turning point as he and his followers made their way back to Jerusalem. However it was also a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. Peter's response to his question about who he was, showed Jesus that his closest followers at least had recognised his special calling and relationship with God: *You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.* This gave Jesus the indication he needed that his disciples were now at a stage when he could give them final specific information and training that would build them up to carry on his work when he no longer here on earth, with Peter getting a very specific role.

From that time on Matthew says, Jesus told them exactly what would happen to him. No wonder they all remembered this place, this incident and this turning point, when we hear Peter's reaction to what Jesus said now. Jesus' rebuke of Peter, *Get behind me, Satan,* is in such stark contrast to the compliment and commission he had given him in the previous paragraph. And then comes the stark outline of what it actually means to follow in Jesus' footprints: *If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me.* This isn't what the disciples thought it involved when they acknowledged who Jesus was, they had a much more glorious role in mind, as we learn a few chapters later when the mother of James and John came to seek honours for her sons.

Hilary Smith

1. Can you look back on your life and see incidents or places which became turning points in your life? Perhaps you might like to share these in the circle.
2. How do you react to this passage in relation to your life of faith in following Jesus? Are there things which you have denied yourself in order to follow him? Are there ways in which you feel as if you had taken up your cross to follow him?