**Fierce Hope**

It’s easy to be despondent at the moment as we wonder about big issues. Will the cease-fire in Gaza hold, and what is the future of the Palestinian people? Will the new government in the USA make it harder for countries to live in peace and mutual respect? Will the climate become even more unpredictable and dangerous in the future? Others have personal issues about illness and unhappy relationships in their families and with colleagues. How can we, as trusting Christians who meet in silence on Mondays, deal spiritually with things that can leave us deeply anxious?

A book I’ve come across recently has come up with the surprising phrase ‘fierce hope’.\* It is by Frances Ward has the subtitle ‘Climate Crisis, Eco-Anxiety and God’. She is realistic about what might happen if we humans continue to treat planet earth carelessly, but is very positive about God in the middle of it all. By facing our worries and lamenting about what we humans have done and what might happen, we will actually deepen our faith.

She writes, ‘Faith in God, if it is anything, keeps hope alive in the covenant of love that God established in the beginning and renews in every living moment.’ As God is faithful (which we read in so many books of the Bible) then God will never abandon that covenant to keep on loving us, and loving the world of which we are a part. God’s love is indestructible. So won’t it be indestructible in the future too? Here is our ground for hope, Frances Ward writes, ‘not just ordinary hope, but a fierce hope that hopes against hope’, turning our fears and anxieties about things that could overwhelm us into a power ‘that is fierce enough to mean we live life to the full’ NOW. This kind of hope – determined and fierce hope – is not something we generate; it comes from God, and ‘is rooted in a contemplative spirit that knows dread and transforms it, through faith in God’.

What I take from this understanding of hope is that our feelings do matter. Our stilling prayer and our attempts to live contemplatively do not ignore our emotions. Frances Ward puts it this way: ‘Instead of giving in to the [feelings] of hopelessness and helplessness, we are called to live each moment to the full’ and to recognize that all things live and move and have their being in God. God will still be God, and will not give up on the promise to be with us always, even to the end of time.

\* *Like There’s No Tomorroew – Climate Crisis, Eco-Anxiety and God* Frances Ward

**Leading into the silence** some poetry about faith and hope from Psalm 71

In you, O Lord, do I seek refuge; let me never be put to shame.

You are my hope, O Lord, my confidence, even from my youth.

Upon you have I leaned from my birth,

when you drew me from my mother’s womb …

As for me, I will hope continually and will praise you more and more.

My mouth shall tell of your righteousness and salvation all the day long,

for I know no end of the telling.

**Leading from the silence** the final verse of a recent eco-hymn

Together we will walk

The new way you reveal;

Our planet cries from wounds

That love alone can heal.

Inspire us, Lord, to give and care

That all may share your earth restored.