

Theology and Safeguarding



Revd. John Hoyland

Lifelong Learning & Continuing Ministerial Development Advisor

Direction of Travel:

What is Theology?

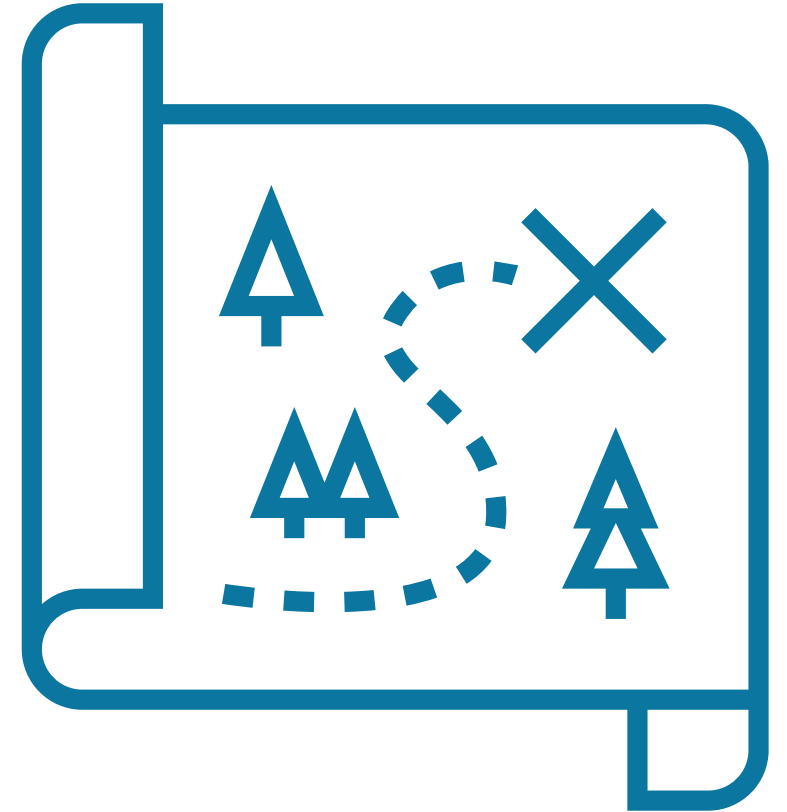
God's Image Bearers

Micah 6.8

Christ the King

God's Kingdom Come on Earth as it is in Heaven

The Name of Jesus

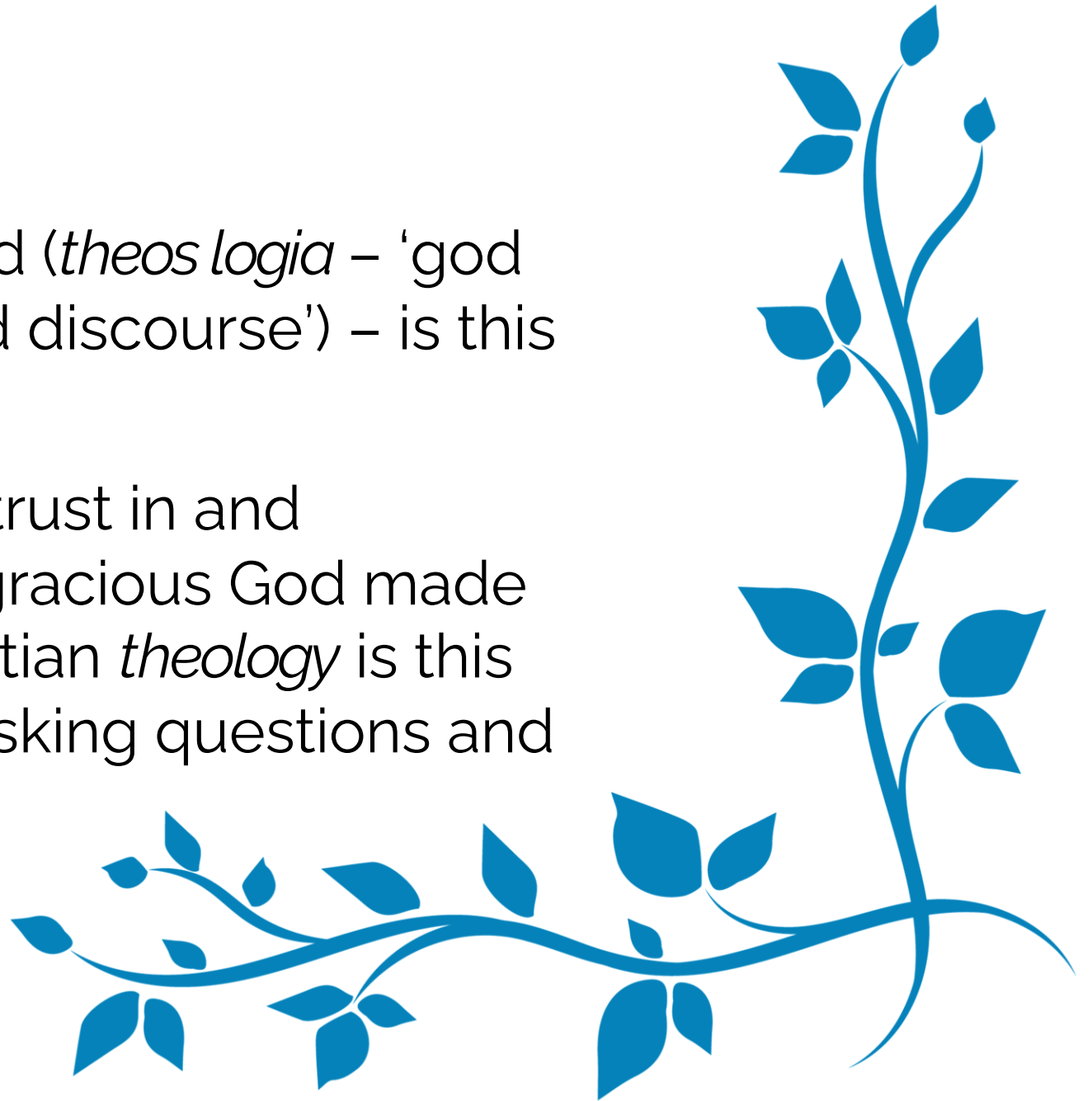


What is Theology?

Theology – the study of God (*theos logia* – ‘god words/god utterances/god discourse’) – is this satisfactory?

“Christian *faith* is at bottom trust in and obedience to the free and gracious God made known in Jesus Christ. Christian *theology* is this same faith in the mode of asking questions and struggling to find at least provisional answers to these questions.”

Daniel Migliore

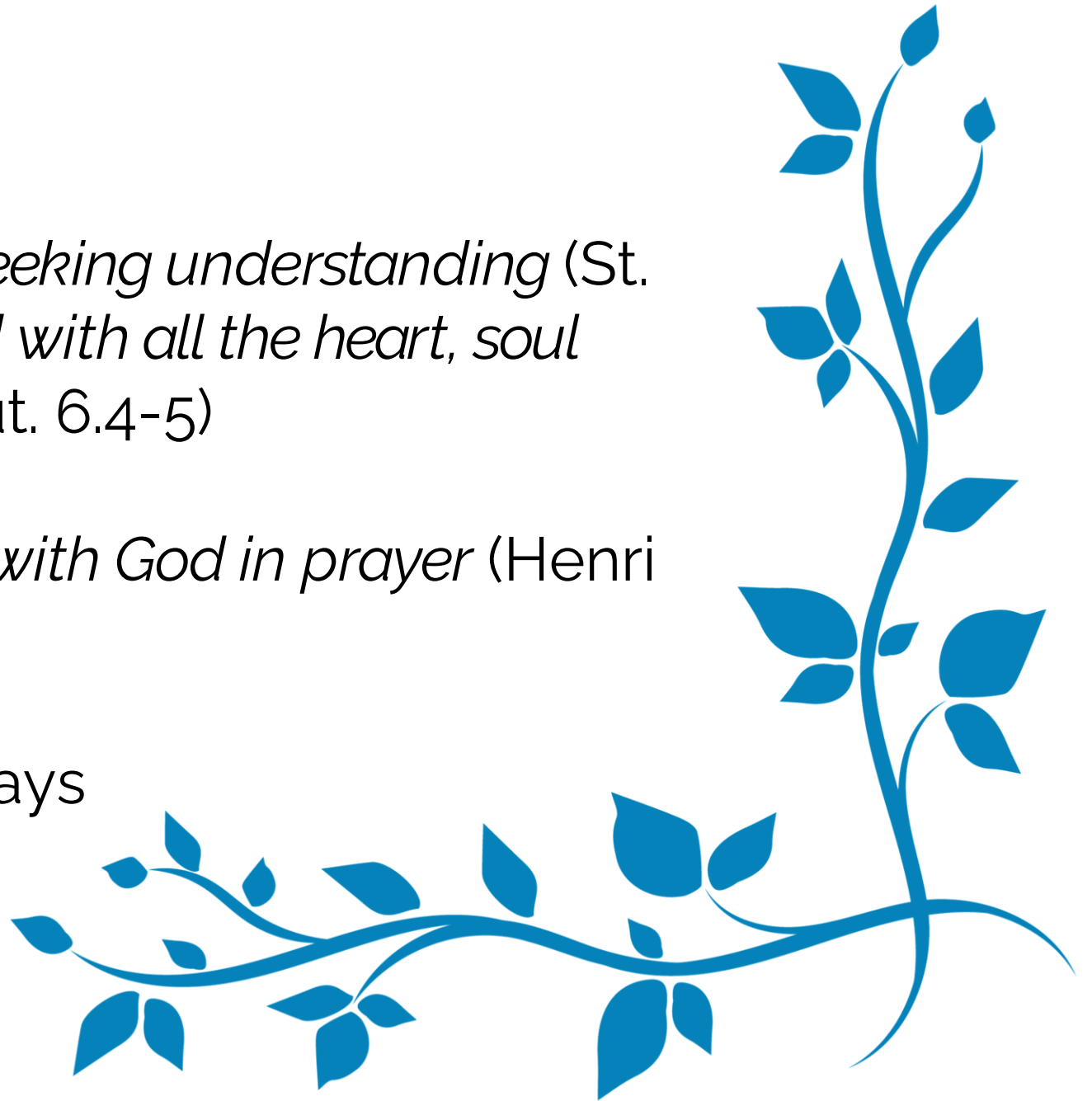


What is Theology?

Christian Theology is *faith seeking understanding* (St. Anselm) in order to *love God with all the heart, soul and might* (the Shema – Deut. 6.4-5)

Christian Theology is *union with God in prayer* (Henri Nouwen).

A Theologian is one who prays (Evagrius Ponticus).



Being God's Image Bearers

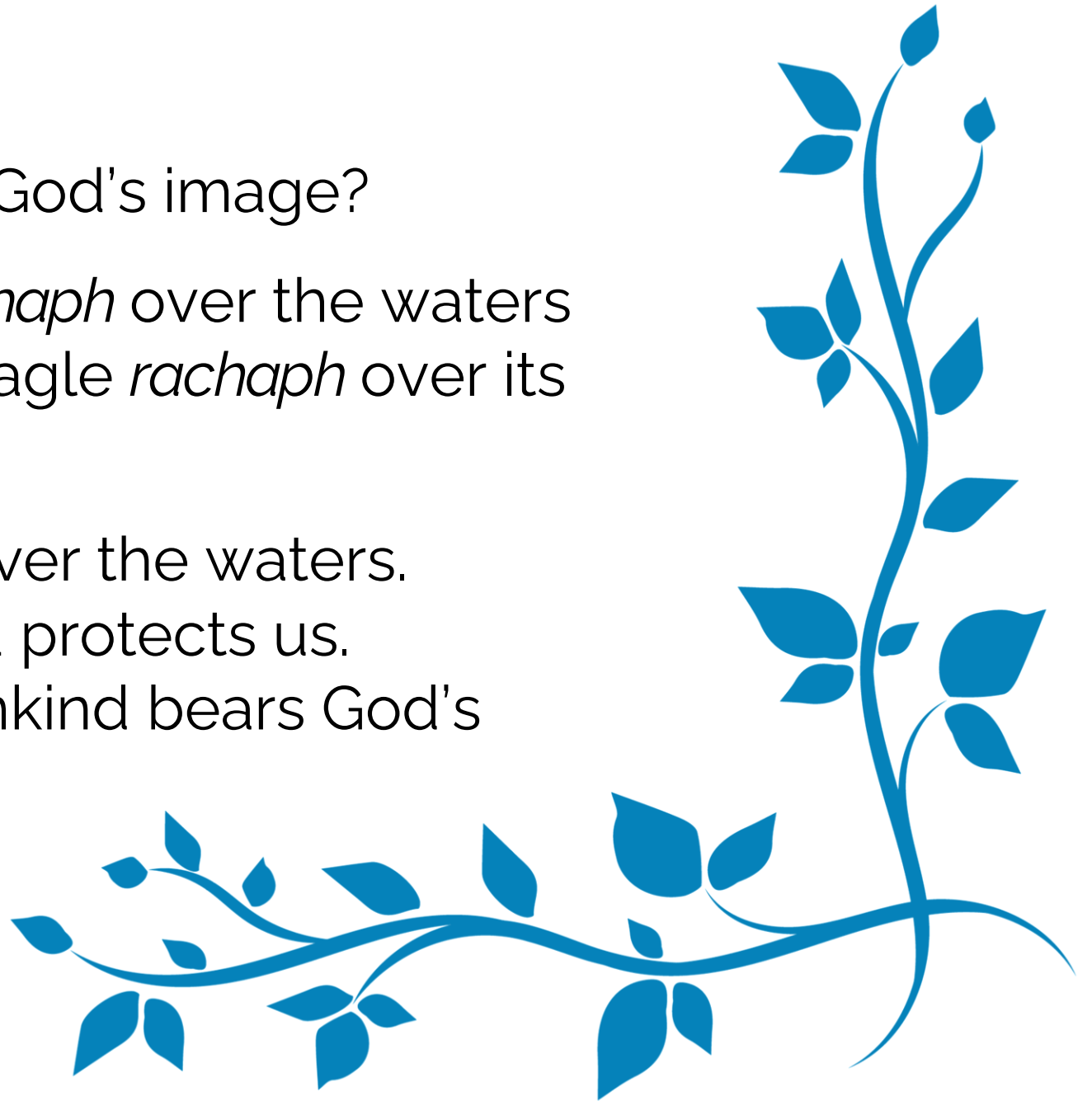
What does it mean to bear God's image?

Genesis 1.2 *ruach elohim rachaph* over the waters (cf. Deuteronomy 32.11 an eagle *rachaph* over its young.)

God's Spirit *broods/hovers* over the waters.

Genesis 1.2 tells us that God protects us.

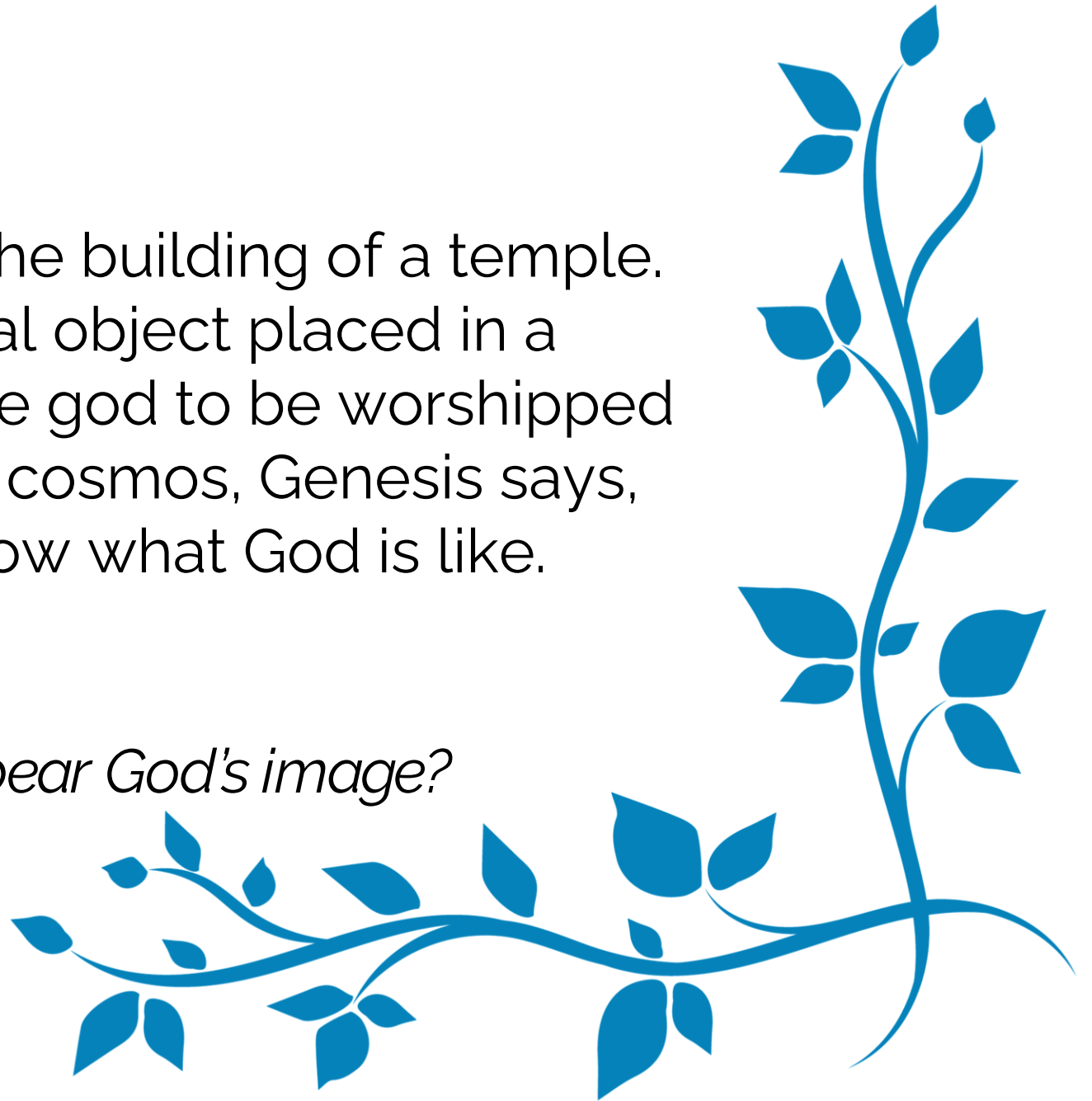
Genesis 1.26-27 says humankind bears God's image.



Genesis 1 tells the story of the building of a temple. In the ancient world, the final object placed in a temple was the image of the god to be worshipped there – in the temple of the cosmos, Genesis says, humankind lets creation know what God is like.

Question:

What does it mean for me to bear God's image?

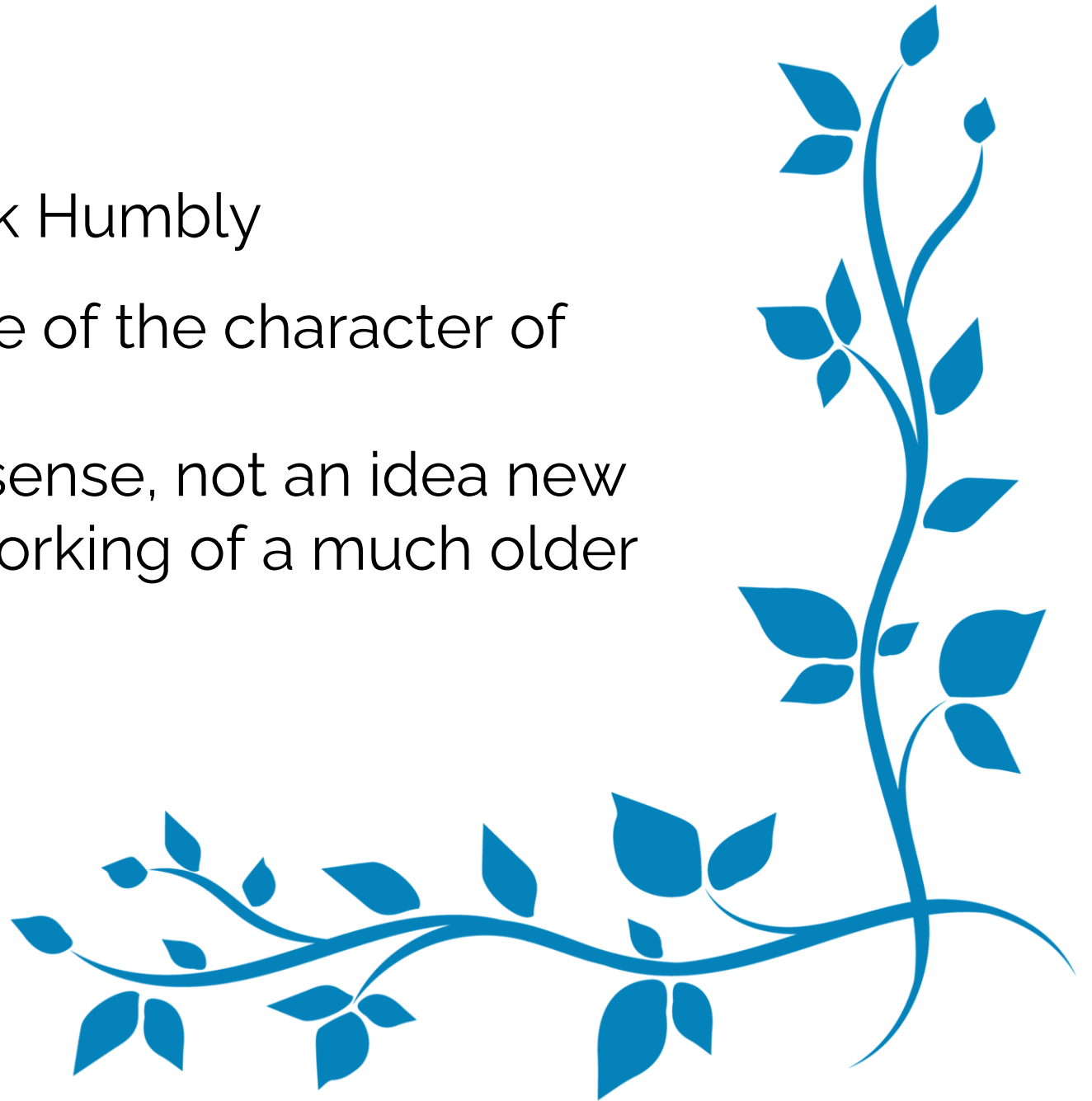


Micah 6.8

Do Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly

Here we see something else of the character of God.

The end of sacrifice is, in a sense, not an idea new to Christianity, but the outworking of a much older Jewish idea.



This is the task to which we are called – we see this embodied in Christ (more of this shortly).

We cannot, either as individuals or as a church, claim to be doing justly, loving mercy or walking humbly while the church is not a safe place for all.

Question:

How do I ensure my presence offers safety to all?

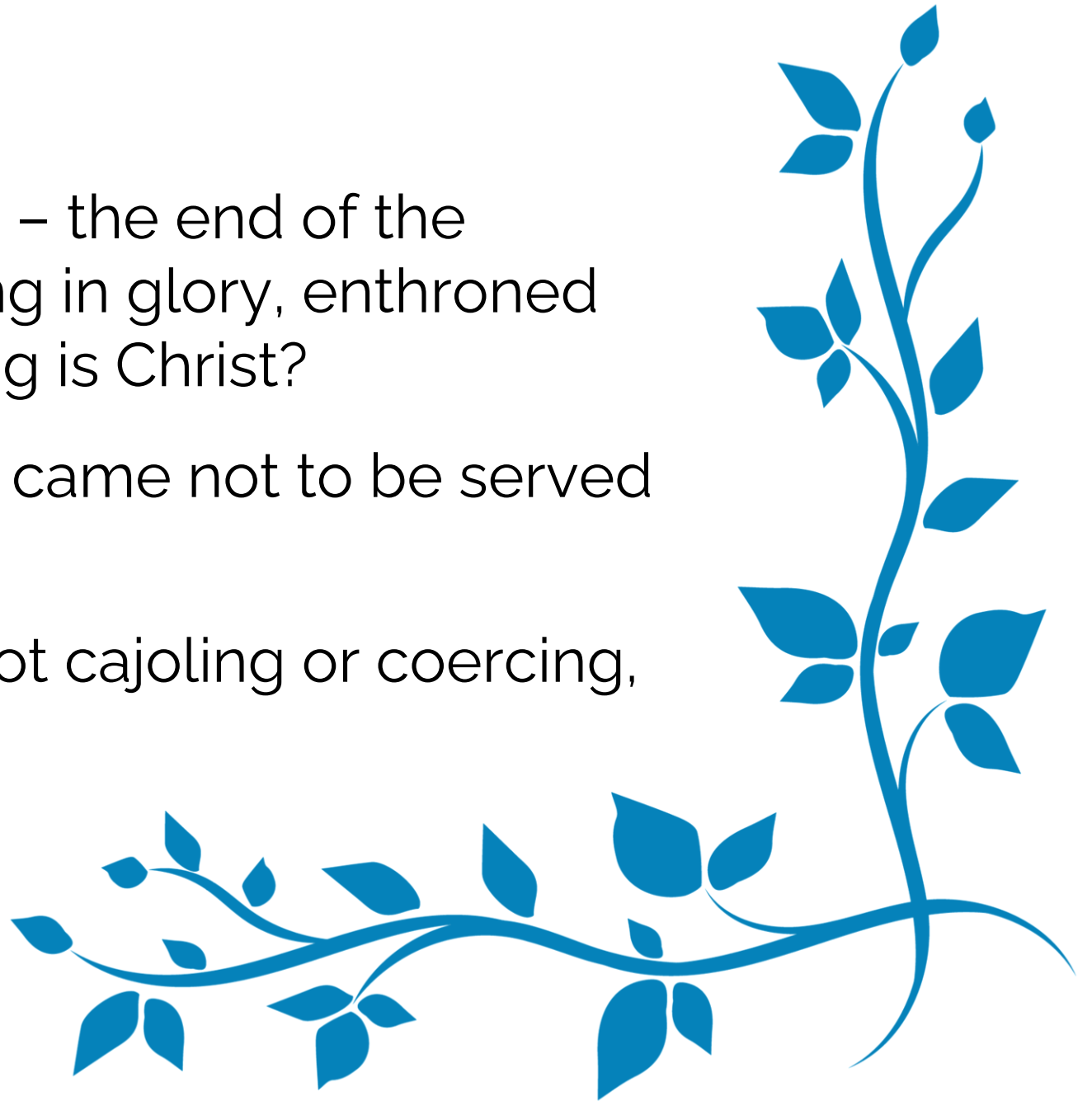


Christ the King

The Feast of Christ the King – the end of the Church's year. Christ the King in glory, enthroned on high. But what sort of king is Christ?

Matt. 20.28 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.'

Nor lording it over others, not cajoling or coercing, but serving.



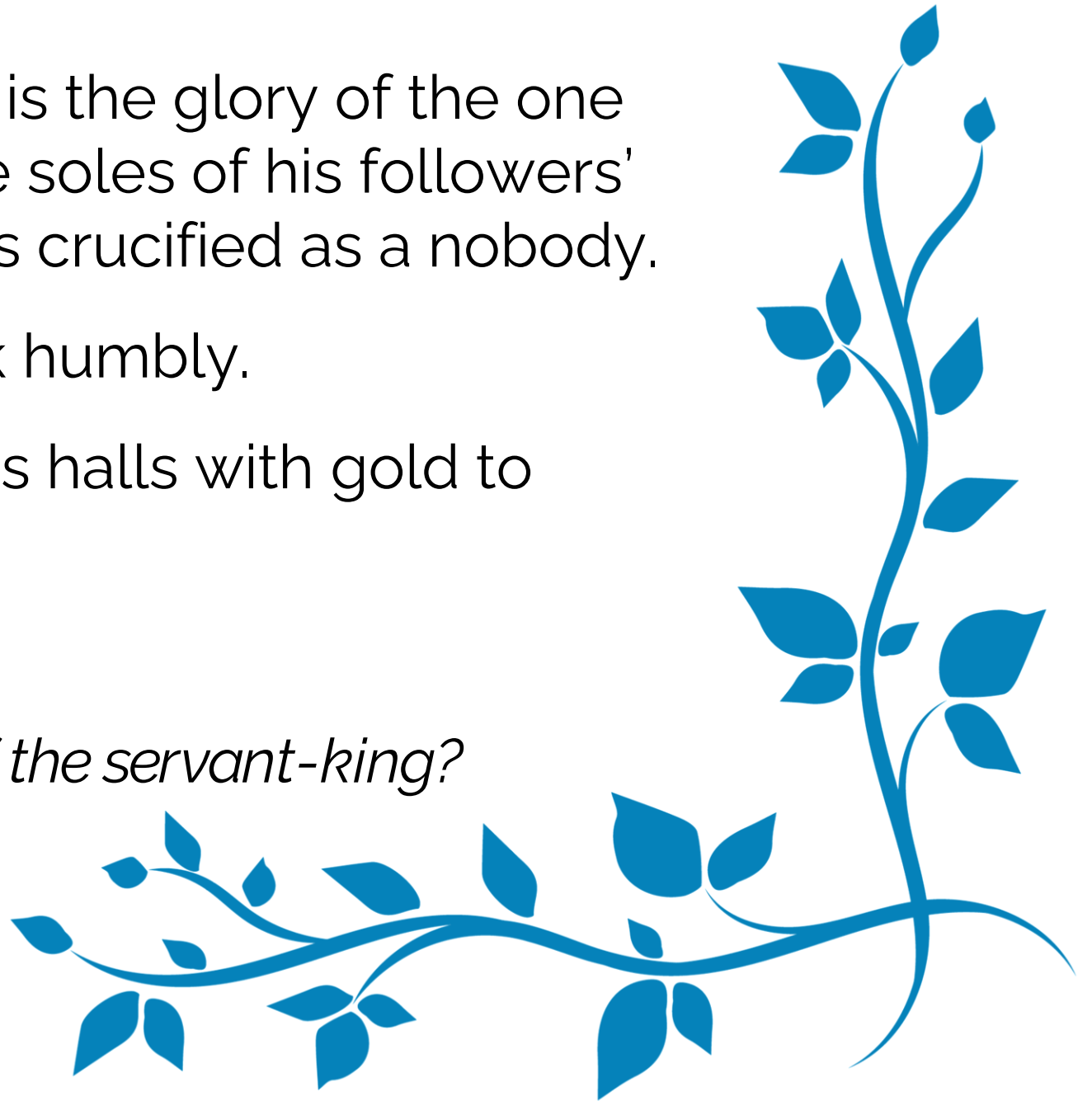
The glory of Christ the King is the glory of the one who wipes the filth from the soles of his followers' feet. The glory of one who is crucified as a nobody.

Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly.

This is not a king who fills his halls with gold to show off his wealth.

Question

How do we reflect the glory of the servant-king?

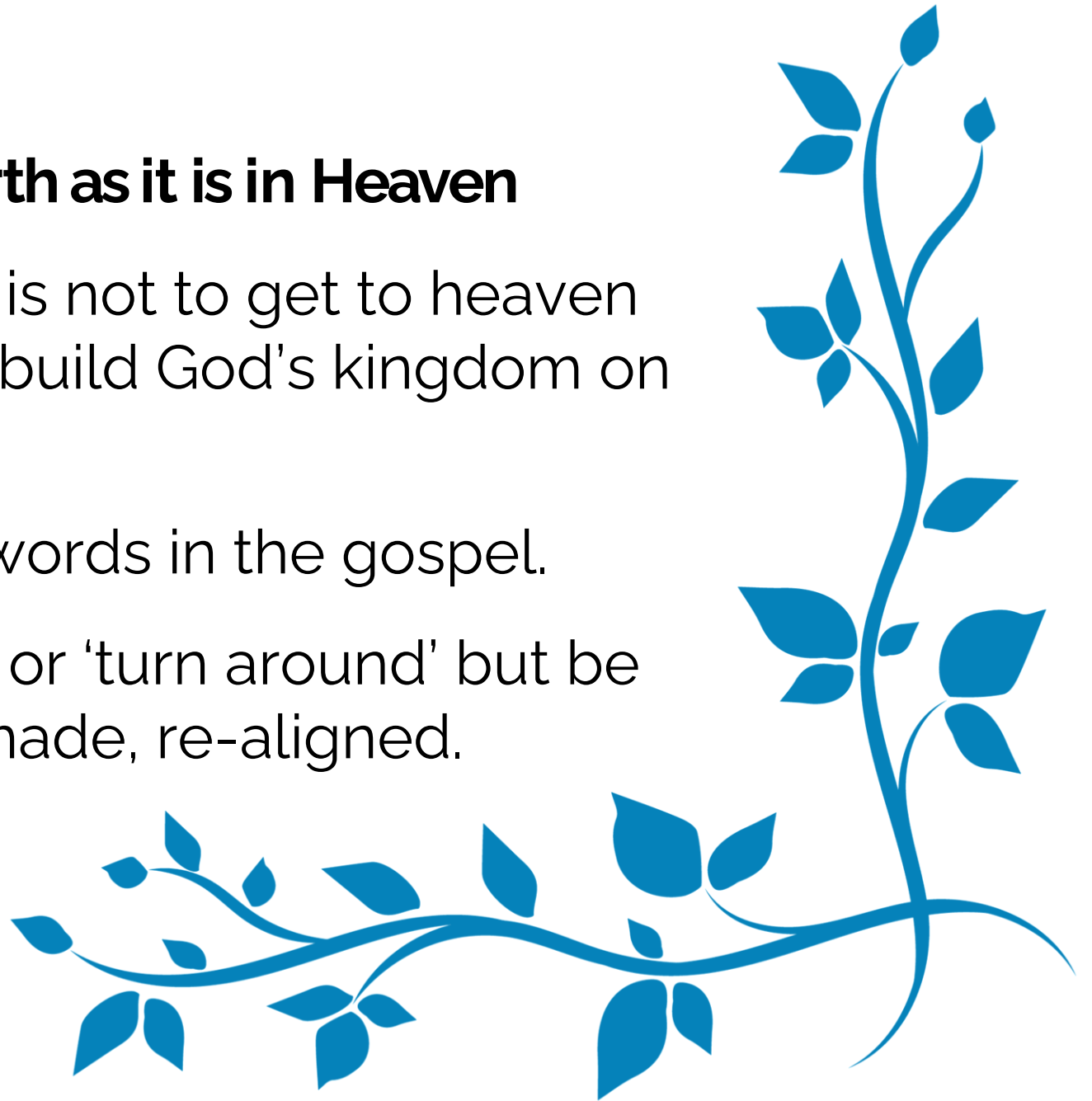


God's Kingdom Come on Earth as it is in Heaven

The aim of the Christian life is not to get to heaven when you die, but rather to build God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Mark 1.15 – Jesus' opening words in the gospel.

Repent – not just 'say sorry' or 'turn around' but be completely re-formed, re-made, re-aligned.



The good news is that the Kingdom of God has come near. Our task, as the body of Christ, is to continue to proclaim by word but perhaps more importantly by deed.

Question:

What does it mean to build God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven?



The Name of Jesus

Joshua/Jesus Yehoshua/Iēsous

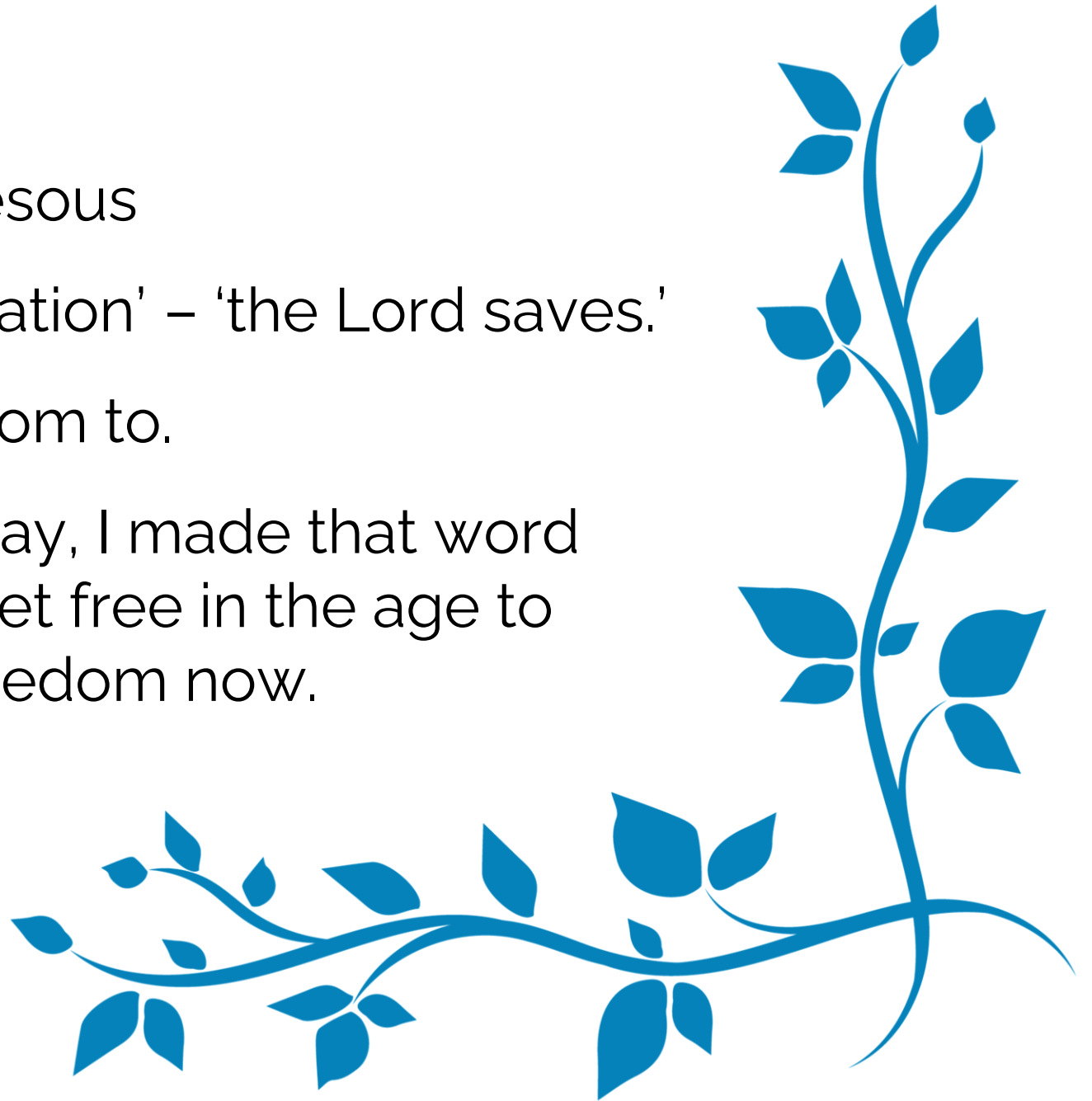
'The Lord (YAHWEH) is salvation' – 'the Lord saves.'

The Lord sets free/gives room to.

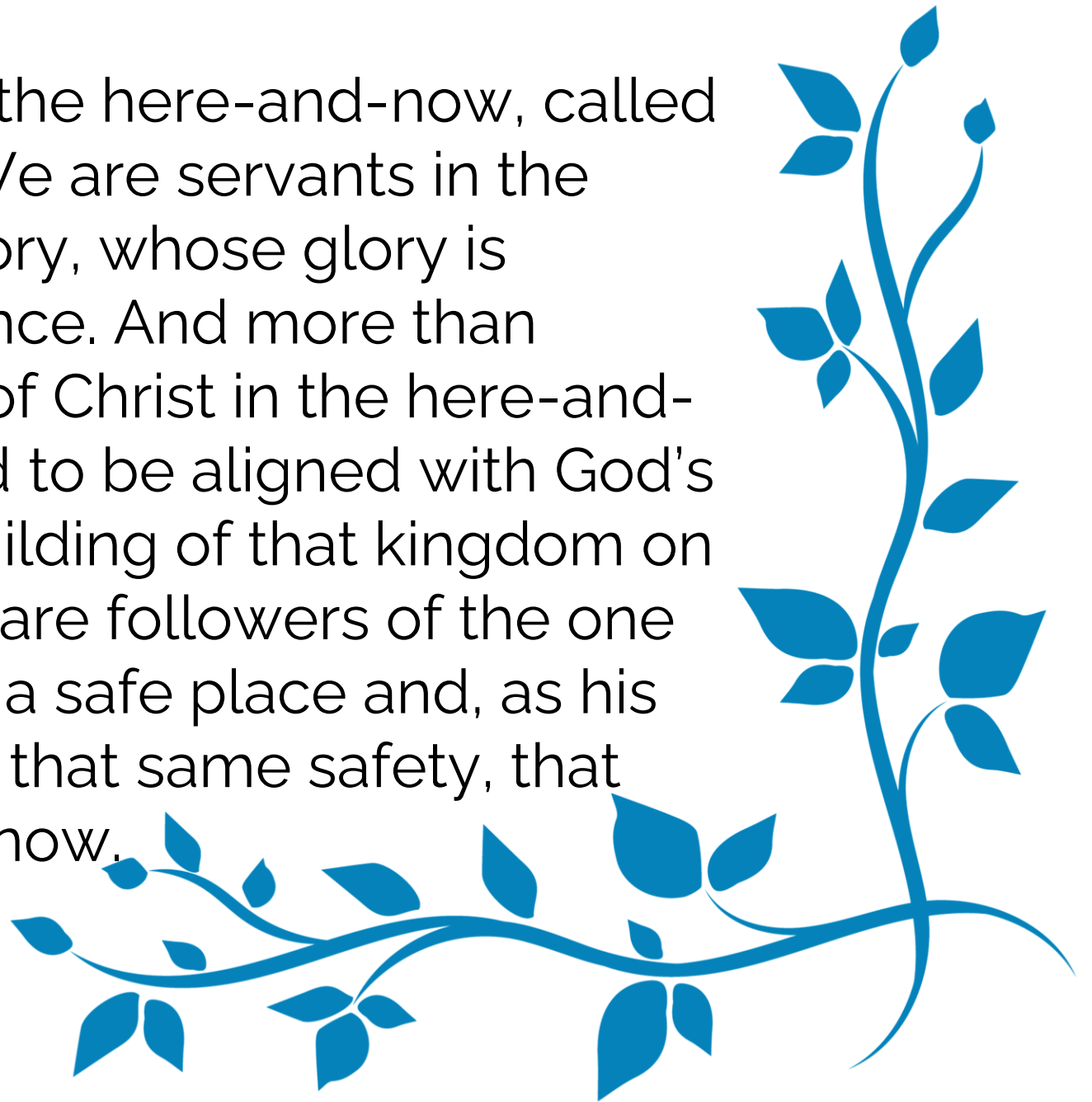
Don't over-soteriologise (okay, I made that word up!) – yes, it's about being set free in the age to come, but it's also about freedom now.

Question:

What does it mean for Christ to be the one who 'gives us room?'

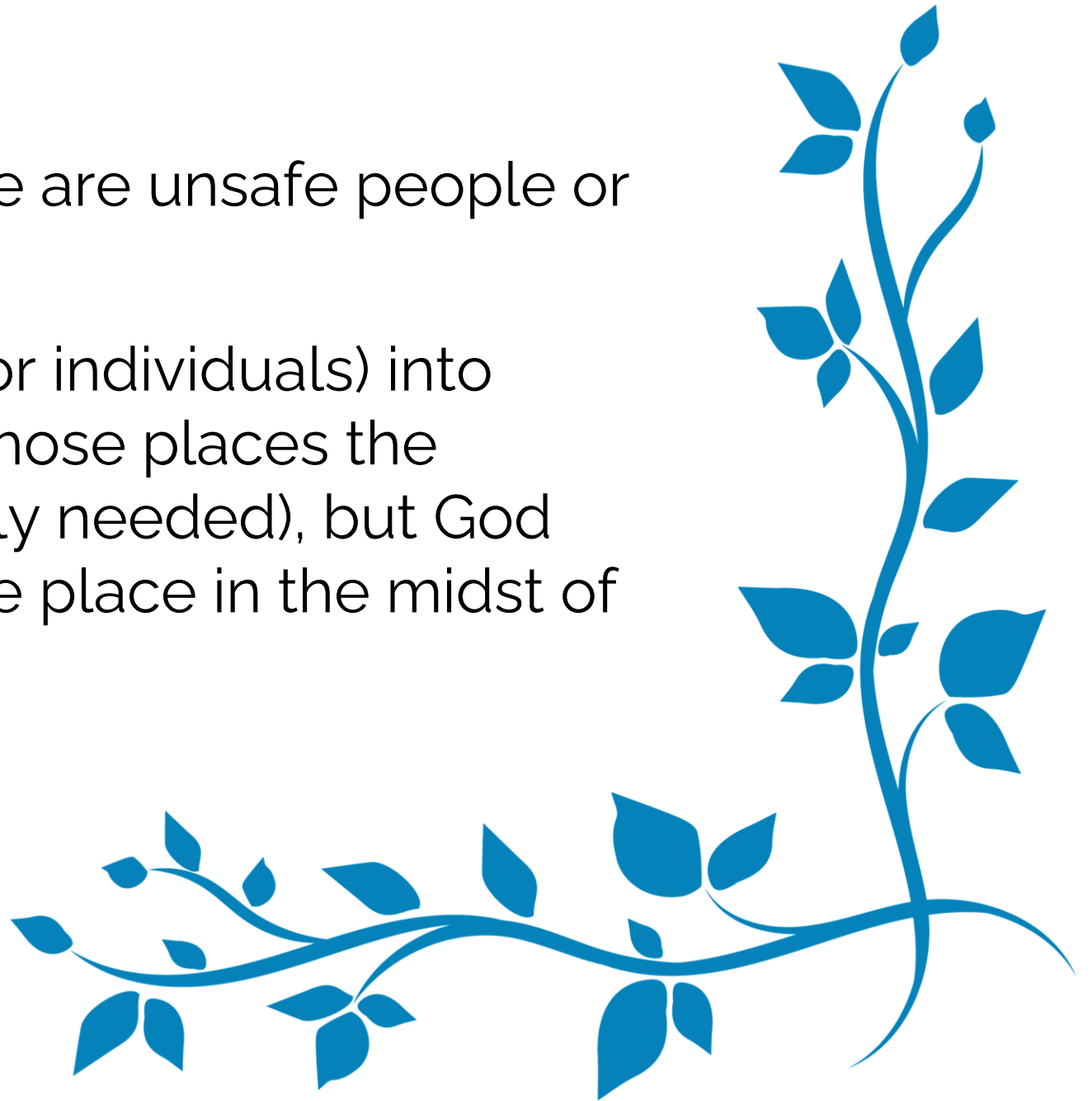


We are God's image-bearers in the here-and-now, called to justice, mercy and humility. We are servants in the here-and-now of the King of Glory, whose glory is revealed in service, not dominance. And more than servants, we are the very body of Christ in the here-and-now, and Christ calls humankind to be aligned with God's kingdom, and to work for the building of that kingdom on earth, in the here-and-now. We are followers of the one who sets us free, who sets us in a safe place and, as his followers, we are called to offer that same safety, that same freedom in the here-and-now.



We can do none of this if we are unsafe people or an unsafe place.

Yes, God calls the Church (or individuals) into unsafe places (because in those places the kingdom is most desperately needed), but God calls the Church to be a safe place in the midst of those unsafe places.



So safeguarding is not just about paperwork or training. It's not just about record-keeping or a standing item on the PCC agenda. It's not just about having a PSO.

Safeguarding lies at the heart of what it means for us to be Church. It's about ensuring that we enable a safe space for each and every human person to flourish fully, as God longs for us all to do.

