

Parish Church of **St. Barnabas, Swanland** *Sharing Christ through friendship.*
 Small Group notes for week beginning Sunday **21/6/15 (Trinity 3/ Father's Day).**
 Hosea 11:1-11 & John 3:1-7- "*God our loving Father*"

Welcome	Do you agree with the parenting mantra 'you've got to be cruel to be kind'? Or do children learn best from loving encouragement without firm discipline?
Worship	<i>Suggested songs: Songs of Fellowship: 1 Abba, Father, let me be; 90 Father, I can call you father; 96 Father in heaven how we love you; 236 I'm special because God has loved me; 1493 O sacred King;</i> <i>(NB: 20 files containing about 30 newer songs are available to borrow from the office for groups)</i>
Word (refs.)	<i>The sermon from Sunday's 9am service is available to listen to on www.stbchurch.org.uk (click on the 'downloads' tab) – these notes are based on the three key points from that.</i>
<u>Read</u> Hosea 11:1-11	<p>The passage depicts Israel's relationship with God in terms of a child and their father.</p> <p><u>1. A loving Father</u> What pictures in vv.1-4 are used to describe the relationship between God and Israel? What historical events are being referred to? Note: 'Ephraim' (v.3) is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel. In what way does God compare himself here to a tender, loving father? What other phrases in vv. 8-11 reveal God's loving concern for his people? How far does our experience of fatherhood affect our understanding of God as father?</p> <p><u>2. A suffering Father</u> God experienced the pain of Israel turning away from him (v.7). In what ways were they wayward and rebellious (v.2)? How did God feel about it? How does this help us? How might these verses help a parent who is having trouble with a rebellious child?</p> <p><u>3. A disciplining Father</u> The references to returning to Egypt or being ruled by Assyria (v.5) denote a threat of exile from the land for God's people – but there is also the promise of restoration (v.11) in response to God's call to repent and return ('roar', v.10). How might this help us understand our own experience of God's 'discipline'? Look briefly at Hebrews 12:4-13. In what ways might we experience God's discipline (e.g. feelings, events, relationships) and how might it actually be good for us?</p>
John 3:1-7	Here Jesus challenges Nicodemus about the reality of faith. Staying with the idea of God's fatherly love, what does Jesus say is the prerequisite for having a relationship with God (i.e. as Father, cf. John 1:12)? Pray in your group for a fresh realisation of our status dependent as children of our heavenly Father.
Witness	<p><u>Pray</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ for your mission link person(s) or project ❖ for any who know God as creator and judge but not yet as a loving Father. ❖ for opportunities to speak of God as father this week <p><u>Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ a group activity during over the next few weeks to which you can invite those who are not yet Christians (e.g. walk, day out, garden party, summer barbecue, etc.)