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NEWSLETTER

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PASTORAL LETTER

Lockdown and Lent ! " You cannot be serious !"

I am not sure what to give up for Lent, after all lockdown for a year has robbed us of so many of life's pleasurable activities that make it interesting and bearable.

Human interaction and social gatherings have almost disappeared, even shopping is not the same. Many of us have had to self-isolate for lengthy periods of time resulting in a rise of loneliness and depression. Add to that the angry and frustrated people demonstrating, the draconian regulations and increasing enforcement by the authorities and we seem to have become a society in meltdown.

Of course, this is only one point of view. Another may be the opportunities many of us have had to prioritise what is important to us in this life and examine our real desires. For the Christian this can be a time to reflect on our own faith with many of the daily distractions gone.

Jesus spent periods of time alone with his heavenly Father working out his mission and refreshing himself in the Father's presence without pressure from disciples, family and crowds. For him these were seasons, events in his life that ended with a return to fellowship with his disciples and a continuation of his mission.

We too know that this pandemic will end and we shall pick up our lives again, but maybe not in the same old way.

For me one of the benefits of this lockdown is that I have gained an atheist friend!!

He is my Landlady's brother and is part of the "family bubble" in this household. We meet every Saturday night to discuss the week in politics, cultural wars, life, lockdown and statistics. Just some light banter! Around socially distanced coffee (of course) we spend about 3 hours in discussion.

He is an atheist and has written several books against religion which he sees as an oppressive tool against mankind's progress towards a more advanced civilization.

Over the months I have found my own faith deepening and what has emerged is a recognition that we both have the same hopes and dreams but we label them differently. He stumbles at Jesus as a personal saviour but our interpretations of what is a perfect world agree almost to the last detail. This has made me believe that we are all born with some sort of God consciousness which I interpret as God's Holy Spirit within and he says is some sort of Universal Spirit.

I have pointed out some of the OT and NT verses that support us both when it comes to justice, peace, love, kindness etc. Whilst he has pointed out some of the passages that many Christians wish were not in the Bible as his defence.

So, for me Lent has become more about what I take up than give up. Without my Saturday night discussions, I would not have gained a deeper sense of my own faith and walk - and we are going to continue them. I shall not be giving them up. Of course, the chocolate biscuits will have to go, but only if I am prepared to be serious about working out my own faith and walk with my heavenly Father.

Lockdown has been a preparation for Lent. God has stripped away many things in our lives and has given us an opportunity to explore our faith.

Let's use this time wisely, God bless

Peter Griffiths

Look backward with gratitude,
Look onward with Hope,
Look upward with confidence.

**SUNDAY SERVICES WILL BE ONLINE UNTIL FURTHER
GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE IS FORTHCOMING.**

Sunday 7th February – including Communion

Sunday 14th February

Sunday 21st February – including Communion

Sunday 28th February

LENT EVENING PRAYER

Thursdays 8-9pm. - 25 Feb, 4 Mar, 11 Mar, 18 Mar, 25 Mar

Time to pray together, read scripture and journey with God in Lent. We'll use scripture from the 'Worship the Wilderness' booklet for a short discussion too. You do not need to read the book to take part.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5408158881?pwd=ank5UmJGRGVMVXJWWFRSL1IPSVBnZz09> Meeting ID: 540 815 8881 Passcode: ccnsfb

(This will be the same for every meeting)

Worship in the Wilderness

For Lent, you are invited to buy the Worship in the Wilderness devotional book from Engage Worship. This will accompany the sermon series and evening prayer meetings.

There are 5 daily devotions per week and space to pray and reflect as we journey together towards Easter.

Take a look here at the book:

<https://engageworship.org/store/product/worship-in-the-wilderness-personal-devotions>

Books are available for the suggested donation of £2.50 (the church will pay the rest). Please contact Ruth if you would like one.

FAMILY NEWS

Whilst the World continues to cope with the Coronavirus Pandemic, we pray that with the care and support of family and friends and medical professionals most will return to full health as quickly as possible.

There are many people in this country and throughout the World who are suffering and we think of them all at this time. With over 100,000 deaths in this country now, we continue to remember all who have sadly lost their battle, especially those known to us and of course, Capt. Sir Tom Moore. We think also of all who are bereaved.

With your support Lord, we pray that things will improve quickly and with the rollout of vaccinations we hope for better times once again as this year progresses. To quote Capt. Sir Tom Moore, “Tomorrow will be a Good Day”!

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic is affecting all our lives. You can find reliable information and tips to help you cope during this time on the MIND web site (mind.org.uk).

Our thoughts are with all those Members and friends who are unwell at the moment and wish them a speedy recovery. It’s good to know that those who have had operations recently are also progressing well.

CHARITY GIVING

For those of you who have Mission Boxes, please, if you are able, continue to put something inside for when they are next collected in and opened.

If you have a favourite Charity that you support, again, please remember that they would be very grateful if you can send them a small donation at this time, perhaps one like the RNIB (rnib.org.uk) or the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home (battersea.org.uk). With Charity shops closed again at present, please think of some of the larger organisations as well, as they are also in need of raising funds, or perhaps some more local ones like the North London Hospice (northlondonhospice.org).

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING OVER RECENT WEEKS?

We are now one month into a new year and Spring is just around the corner but we are still in “Lockdown”. Ten months ago, we went into “Lockdown” last year and whilst it may seem we are in the same position now, as then, we can however see there is hope around the corner as vaccinations rollout to those in the top 4 categories, including a number of our Church family, to date.

What have you been doing in recent weeks? – Christmas was not as it should have been with families unable to meet together as normal, to ensure people stayed safe, we didn’t even hold our Christmas Day Morning Family Service, in-person – Oh so different.

I’m sure we all made the same New Year’s Resolution, praying for an improvement and hope for an end to this terrible pandemic that’s been testing us all for too long now.

God has however been with us, is with us now and will be with us all in the future.

No doubt many of you are only thinking about your families and coping together at home. With many parents again having to cope with home schooling – Who’s learning more, the parents or the children? Even more difficult is having to work from home as well!

We pray for all parents and families at this time, Lord.

With the weather not helping in getting out for some daily exercise, it’s not just raining but now some snow and ice, at least Joe Wicks is back on the BBC for some exercising together (other “trainers” are now also available). It’s good to see that there are many other programmes on the BBC, helping to provide some daily learning for different age groups.

There are of course many other interesting things to watch on various channels. Don’t forget music programmes, listen to the radio or go to BBC Sounds. Remember BBC Arts and BBC Bitesize or catch up on the iPlayer or other “Catch Up” Channels or places like YouTube. Don’t forget to keep in touch though, communication is so important!

In our Service on the 31st January Ruth referred to the article written by John Campbell of Tottenham URC which is reprinted below. If anyone has any questions please contact Ruth or Clare.

Vaccine Wariness....

“I’m just going to trust Jesus!”

Last Thursday Evening I was sharing a ZOOM conversation with a number of Preachers from our Synod – we call it “Preachers’ Circle”. Most of the conversation was about how you might preach on Chapter One of Mark’s Gospel (because a lot of us are doing that right now). But at the end someone told of people they knew who were VERY WARY of taking the offered Covid-19 Vaccine and said they were just going to trust Jesus.

So, what do you say to someone who says, “I’m just going to trust Jesus”?

I had to think fast, but here is my response. It comes in two parts:

What would Jesus do?

Jesus probably had MORE faith than anyone else ever. He believed and he trusted God and he was able to do many amazing miracles, all rooted in his faith and trust in God. Yet he clearly didn’t think that everything was just a matter of faith. He seems to expect us to behave sensibly and rationally as well. Faith has its place, but so do reason and what we would call “science”.

- Jesus could miraculously feed thousands, but he still expected his disciples to remember to bring bread with them when they needed it for their travels (**Mark 8.14-16**)
- Jesus could heal people suffering from leprosy but he was quite clear that back in the time of Naaman (as recorded in the Scriptures) God healed no God-fearing lepers in Israel, only the non-believing foreign commander of the opposing army (**Luke 4.27**)

- Jesus was adamant that when the Tower of Siloam collapsed and killed eighteen men it was simply a matter of physics and structural engineering – those eighteen killed were no worse or better than anyone else (**Luke 13.4**)

So, as far as I can see, if there was a vaccine to immunise you against a dangerous disease, Jesus would have expected the already hard-pressed people of Galilee to be vaccinated. It's just sensible. Jesus looked to his followers to be sensible.

What should we do?

Look, also, at how we apply our own trust in Jesus from day to day. We don't put all our faith in faith. We all show multiple times each day that we know that Jesus also expects us to be sensible and do the rational thing. We know that we have to be sensible even when we expect Jesus to help us and look after us.

When I want to cross Tottenham High Road I don't just step out onto the road and put my faith and trust in Jesus to stop the traffic and protect me. I look first. I go to a crossing place. I even campaign for there to be a safe pedestrian phase at the crossing. Trusting Jesus and being sensible are not alternatives. We need to do both. Jesus expects us to be sensible. There has been a very, very rigorous process of testing and checking and monitoring using bigger and bigger sample populations that looks out for every conceivable problem and side effect before any new vaccines are offered to the general population.

Vaccination helps everyone, not just me. I can best show my faith and trust in Jesus by being sensible when I can. And right now taking a carefully- tested vaccine against Covid-19 is being sensible.

So that's my two-part reply. I hope it makes sense.

I'm just going to trust Jesus, but, for me, that certainly means taking the vaccine when it's offered!

John Campbell

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

I was lamenting on the phone about the new lockdown to a friend when she kindly said, ‘God is on the throne; He will sort out what is going on soon’. I believed her, but couldn’t help wondering how such a statement will come across to a non-believer or someone struggling with their faith. More so in this our new world where life had been far from normal for so long and rather hard for many. It might be rather difficult for such a person to believe or agree with her statement.

I guess the better answer could be to remind such a person of how God is continuously active in our world. To talk about His creations and the continuity of life. The continual day and night, the seasons, the daily new births, and so on, despite the ongoing lockdown and restrictions. I truly believe God is on the throne as my friend said and working His purpose out. Don’t focus long on any setbacks or drawbacks. Try to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Lift up your spirit by spending more time on thanking and praising our Lord and God who is on the throne, like the saints and living creatures in heaven as written below.

Revelations 4:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Ola Lawal

REMEMBER - STAY AT HOME, PROTECT THE NHS, SAVE LIVES