

Musings from the Manse

Thank you to all of you who replied to my email asking for your opinion on re-opening our churches, I have collated all the information and Keith has summarised the replies from the preachers, who were all asked if they would be happy to start taking services again. The next step is for the Circuit Leadership Team to meet and decide the way forward. This is scheduled for Thursday next week. Although many of us are keen for worship to resume as soon as possible, our main concern must always be the safety and wellbeing of all concerned.

We are between two places as a Church family, and this links very neatly with Jacob's story in Genesis. Jacob, who was Abrahams Grandson was leaving home! He was between Beer-sheba and Haran. Think about Jacob's journey a minute, it was approximately 400 miles long and for most of it, he is between two places, alone and with very little.

The way we are at the moment in society, puts us in a similar place to Jacob. Pre Covid19 and Post Covid19, between two places one familiar that we miss, partly because we are not quite sure what the new way will be. We are between the place we have known and lived and a place that is still developing and still has a lot of uncertainties. As a Church family we are also in an uncertain place, when do we open, how will that happen, what will it look like? If only it was as simple as just unlocking the doors and going back to "normal"!

Uncertainty can be a worrying time for some, and others find it an exciting place to be, the only thing I know for sure right now is that God knows us each one of us and knows what is right for us. The CLT must be mindful of everyone in the decisions made about the re-opening of the Church buildings, so pray for us, this week as we face these difficult decisions, because whatever we decide will probably be wrong for some people, some will feel we have made the wrong decision, some may feel hurt or scared and together as a family we must acknowledge that and not judge others for their opinions

In the Genesis story, Jacob has a dream that God is beside him and God tells Jacob, he will gift the land where he is to him and his descendants. God is giving inheritance for Jacob and his family. Jacob is in awe and is unsure, but he realises that God is Good! Jacob took the stone he had been resting on and set it as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. Jacob had very little with him on his journey, and the oil would have been an expensive item, so pouring it on a stone would be a strong sign to God, that Jacob was thankful.

Being Abraham's Grandson, didn't get Jacob any automatic rights to be at one with God, like us, he had to discover that relationship for himself. We don't inherit a relationship with God, but there are many things we inherit in life. Money, property, stocks and shares? All these are possibilities, then there are things we inherit from family, like hair colour, eye colour, temperament, and throughout our lives there are ties we each make with friends, and the things we learn or inherit from them. Some people we meet in life, we never forget, others we meet, we maybe would like to forget, but in my experience, we learn just as much from either group.

Take a moment and think about a few areas, that when combined, bring us to who we are today: our families; our friends; where we live; what we do; our relationship with God.

What we inherit from our Church family will be different from what we might inherit from our own family and a combination of all these things and more, is what gives us our personal identity. God knows each of us and is always present, but we might not always acknowledge that, as other influences sometimes distract us, and right now there seem to be a lot more distractions to deal with.

Psalm 139, is one of my favourites “*O God, you search me, and you know me*” It talks of God’s all-knowing and widespread presence. God is with us, always. However, there are times when we might coast along or get caught in the rush and haste of life and temporarily forget what our Christian Faith does for us. As mere mortals, our minds can only cope with so many things, particularly with what was “normal” if we could call it that, or what is the “new normal” going to be. Thoughts, I am sure occupying a lot of space in a lot of people’s minds. In lots of ways we are spending much more of our time unsure about the future.

Every one of us is experiencing lots of changes and our Church family it is no different. Change can be good, but also brings uncertainty. God has the power and ways to deal with things, in Psalm 139 verse 6 it says:

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.
and at verse – 17

¹⁷ O God, how difficult I find your thoughts; ^[b]how many of them there are!

We had no way of knowing that when the Church building closed in March, it would be months before we could consider re-opening, no way of imagining the pages and pages of measures we would have to put in place to be able to open again, safely whilst complying with all the new regulations.

Many of the uncertainties of today will change as time passes, the landscape is shifting from day to day, and we have no knowledge of what it will look like in a week, let alone over the next few months. In the reading from Genesis, it would be fair to say that Jacob was not sure of his faith, but God came to him and promised a future. Our future is unknown by us, but by trusting in God, nurturing our individual relationship with Him and working together as a Church family, we will find our way in this new unknown territory. I am sure that this is the way to come out of lockdown with a strong future of Faith and Love for Jesus, and new ways to share that with those around us.

I came across the following prayer written by William Barclay, which I think is relevant for us now:

*O God, help me to live one day at a time,
not to be thinking of what might have been,
not to be worrying about what may be.
Help me to accept the fact
that I cannot undo the past
and I cannot foresee the future.
Help me to remember
that I will be never tried beyond what I can bear,*

*that your Father's hand will never cause your child a needless tear,
that I can never drift beyond your love and care.*

AMEN

William Barclay, 1907 – 1978

Rev Nik Wooller

24th July 2020