



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'SUSPENDED CHURCH'
NEWSLETTER
Sunday 24th January 2021
NEWS UPDATE



Diocesan Video – next Sunday 31st January

We have some lovely contributions in store for next week's video. The video link will be sent out, and the paper newsletter limited to those who would struggle to watch the video due to lack of internet access.

Mike Clayton's Licensing Service – Sunday 18th April

A message from Mike:



Dear Everyone at St. Christopher's and Emmanuel,
I have had the chance to meet at least some of you already but this is to announce officially that I will be joining you all as an Assistant Curate to Peter with my licensing on Sunday 18th April at 2pm (details nearer the time). I am coming as a free transfer from St.Cuthbert's in Fulwood where I have been worshipping since we moved to Preston almost 30 years ago now. I continue to work as a part-time GP, teach UCLAN medical students, and am enlisting as a covid vaccinator down at Bamber Bridge.

These days there is just myself and my wife Anna at home as our three children are all grown up and have left home; our days are always brightened up by seeing pictures and video clips of our new grandchild (we call this watching "Izzy TV"). Thank you so much to everyone who has already made me so welcome and my prayer is for the Lord to continue to bless us in the storm, in the middle of all these winds and the waves - to know and to share that peace that only our Lord Jesus can bring.

God bless, Mike.

We are delighted to be welcoming Mike, and we look forward to getting to know Anna better as well. Having known Mike for some time through his involvement at St Cuthbert's, I know that his ministry among us will be a great blessing. [Peter]

Opening up the Church Building

The building can be opened up on demand when someone would like to go in and spend time inside. To do so please contact one of the churchwardens, or our administrator Hilary.

Food bank donations can continue to be made. To donate please use the boxes round the back of the building under the canopy. Debra Foster is regularly checking on the building, and will move any donations inside.



Philippians Series



JOY IN ADVERSITY

Week 3

Courage in life and in Death

BIBLE READING – Philippians 1:19-26

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE – by Jim Cam

Challenging Times

The pandemic experience if nothing else has reminded us that we are mortal, vulnerable, and live in a world that isn't quite as predictable or 'safe' as we thought.



Life has always had its uncertainties but this last year or so its 'normal' rhythm of activity has been severely disrupted to put it mildly.



It has felt like we have been in a storm that has raged and then eased, only to return again. It's a storm we have not yet managed to emerge from.

When the waves of adversity hit, we find out how good a foundation we have!

Christ our rock and foundation

God's word teaches us that our rock and foundation in this life is to be Christ in whom we are to trust and build our lives on. His is not some fair-weather prop that is blown away at the first sign of adversity. On him we can depend, who is true and steadfast. So in such times as these our Christian faith can offer us hope to weather the storms of life – for in Christ we have sure reason to hope, both now in the midst of our challenges and trials, and in the future as we look forward to an eternity with God forever.

Facing adversity with courage

How might we respond in the midst of our current adversity where there is uncertainty, illness, and death? Nature's mechanism in handling threats is Flight or Fight. We could run away and retreat into ourselves, or we can seek to draw on the resources of our faith in Christ and respond to our circumstances with compassion, love and the hope we have in Christ.

St Paul's attitude and response when facing imprisonment and the possibility of death was to say that... *"to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*



Paul showed great courage drawn from his experience of Christ in his life:

1) Christ had been *the beginning of life* on the Damascus Road, which turned him around from being a persecutor of Christians, and began his journey of faith in the glorious truth of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

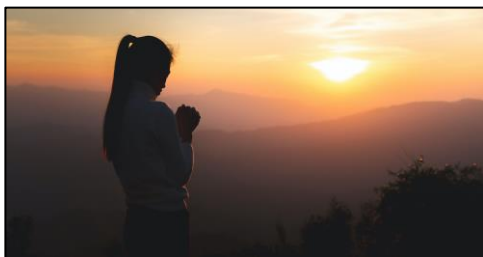
2) Christ had been *the continuing of life* lived in his presence, even in the midst of many challenges and life-threatening moments. The Spirit of the risen Jesus was the source of his determination, courage and strength enabling him, while ever he still had life, to be a source of inspiration and encouragement to his fellow Christians.

3) Christ was *the end of life*, for it was ultimately towards Christ's eternal presence that life was leading. Whenever death came it would be 'gain,' as he would be going to be with Christ.

Paul was torn between two desires; to live for Christ and continue to be a source of encouragement and hope to his fellow Christians, or to depart and be with Christ. But then the choice was not his to make, but God's, and in that he was reconciled to his situation wherever that led.

Responding to our own situation

Facing our current situation with its restrictions and tragedies, we too can be stirred and strengthened by Christ's spirit to be brave and courageous, not in some cold and thoughtless way, but with Christ's love and compassion. While we yet have life to live, with his grace and help we too can seek to live life for Christ, knowing that he promises to be with us. By his grace we can seek to be a source of encouragement and support to each other, our families, and those facing particular trials.



One of the most positive things we can do is pray.

Pray for each other. Pray for our families. Pray for friends who are going through tough times. We need to particularly pray at this time for those facing demanding physical, emotional, or psychological

situations. Those who are under extreme pressure include NHS staff, care workers and teachers. We may not be able to directly encourage them but praying for them is something we can do, the benefit of which we may not even know in this life. And where possible we can sensitively let those we do know who are involved in these situations that we are praying for them. St Paul appreciated and valued the prayers of his fellow Christians, and people today often appreciate it as well.

Since the beginning of the current lockdown, something I've done is put an electric candle in the front bedroom window at night as a symbol of hope in this most darkest critical phase facing us now. We know there is hope, the vaccine will progressively be administered, and it will ultimately defeat the current virus. But for now we still have a difficult and painful time to get through.



Our Ultimate hope

For the Christian, death will not be the end. Whenever death shall come, as St Paul put it, it will be but gain. Because of Christ and his resurrection, death will not be our end but a moving on, a pulling up our anchor and setting sail, a departure on our final voyage that leads to our everlasting haven, our ultimate and final destination, to be with the Lord forever.

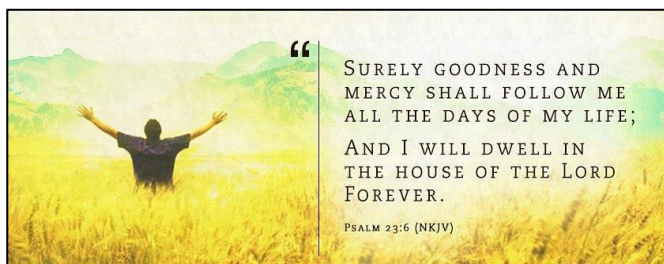
If ever there was a hymn that captured this it is “Forever with the Lord!” composed by James Montgomery (born in Ayrshire 1771 – died in Sheffield 1854). He lived a life of faith that involved a religious passion for causes, including protesting against slavery, and the lot of boy chimney sweeps. He even suffered brief spells in prison when he challenged the status quo.

James Montgomery was a prolific hymn writer. In this hymn he seems to capture something of St Paul's dilemma of striving courageously for the causes of his day and the Gospel, whilst also being in no doubt of his final destination at life's end.

*Forever with the Lord!
Amen; so let it be:
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality.
Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.*

*Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word,
And oft repeat before the throne,
Forever with the Lord!
That resurrection word,
That shout of victory,
Once more, Forever with the Lord!
Amen; so let it be. Amen*

So how should we live today? Live for Christ, serve the Gospel, support one another and those facing challenging times by encouragement and prayer, whilst knowing ultimately that our final destination and home is to be with the Lord forever. AMEN.





Prayers – Written by Mike Clayton

Father, thank you for being our foundation in the storm.

We pray for our world - for all countries struggling with the pandemic,

For all people whatever their background, colour, status or wealth.

For all who are anxious and fearful.

We come before your Throne of Grace knowing we will receive mercy and
find grace to help us in this our time of need.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those in leadership positions in national and local governments.

For all involved in planning and organising the response to the pandemic.

For all those developing, manufacturing and distributing the vaccine.

And for all who care for the sick.

Give them sufficient courage and strength for each day and every day.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the church.

Help us Lord to live for Christ in this day

To be filled with the love of God in all simplicity.

To be a support and encouragement within our families, friends and everyone we meet.

Thank you that we always carry the precious hope of heaven within.

Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Father, grant us sufficient courage for all the situations we face today.

**Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**