

1 August 2020

Dear Family and Friend at St Luke's

August has started and Lockdown seems to drag on and on. What I now see more and more often is people finding new ways of living their life which take cognisance of the demands of the Covid pandemic. So restaurants are opening, tentatively, outdoors. Drama workshops happen with reduced numbers in bigger spaces to accommodate social distancing.

The Council and leadership of the parish continue to think about what we do, what we can start doing, and how to do it safely. Some things remain online – like our services and the Bible Study. Some things can happen 'in person' – such as counselling – where we use the beautiful church gardens to keep everyone present safe. The discussions continue about when and how to begin services again. The diocese has said not until September at the earliest, but even then we will have to consider the rate of infection and limitations imposed by the beautiful church building.

And as we do all this thinking and planning – we are still expected to "make disciples" and grow the Kingdom of God. As I have reflected on the scriptures, I have been struck by the fact that the 'Great Commission' is not conditional. Jesus doesn't say: 'make disciples if you can easily go about. But if you are kept at home, then put it all on hold until the situation changes.' And the book of Acts tells the story of the disciples speaking about Jesus in the temple, and in villages while on the run. In homes in Jerusalem and river banks in Philippi.

## **Alpha**

In finding ways of spreading the Gospel while kept at home, a number of churches have run the Alpha Course very successfully online, and numerous people have discovered the truth of the Gospel and the joy of being a child of God.

The parish will run an online Alpha Course in September. This is a good opportunity to strengthen one's faith, and also invite friends and neighbours to investigate the claims of the Christian faith. If you have done Alpha before, this may still be a 'new' experience for you as they produced some new films for the course in 2016, which became available in 2017. So while the overall course remains the same, the presentation is quite different.

We encourage everyone to consider joining us on Wednesday evenings from 9 September for teaching and discussion – all from the comfort of your own home. And please recommend it to other people you may know – especially if they are not Christian. Details of registration and times and how it will work will be sent out later in the month.

## **Ruth**

We will be looking at the book of Ruth during August, both as a series of sermons and in the Bible Study.

As we were finishing the Study of Acts Chapter 2, I was considering what to look at next – and considered studying Ruth. But as I looked at some of the themes in it, I thought it would be appropriate for the whole parish – especially at times like this.

There are stories of loss, and commitment. Passages of action and hope. A theme of restoration and God using remarkable situations as part of growing his Kingdom. Ruth, although a foreigner from the despised nation of Moab, ends up as one of the women mentioned in the genealogical history of Jesus.

These stories and ideas and teachings are absolutely fitting for the times we find ourselves living through.

Furthermore - in order to keep things “tidy” I wanted to start it at the beginning of the month – which delayed it until the beginning of the next month – which happened to be August. And as August is women’s month – it seems most appropriate to study a book which traces the story of two women, and sees them taking charge of their situation and changing their circumstances so completely.

Seeing God’s hand in this, I can only echo what people said of Jesus (Mark 7:37) – “He has done everything well!”

Blessings!

Ian