

Weekly Newsletter (68)

by and for the Christ Church and Pagham URC families

27th June 2021

Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends....

The hard thing about being back from a holiday is that you have to knuckle down and get on with work, even when your mind is thinking about *'what we did this time last week'*!! Well, this time last week, Colin and I, and another couple, were enjoying the wonderful sunshine of Dawlish in Devon at 'Pastor's Pad'. It is run by a lovely couple, Hazel and Guy, who some years ago felt that they were being called to a radical change in their lives. As they say on their website,



"We're followers of Jesus and, as part of a vision 20 years ago, we run Pastor's Pad – a place of peace for anyone working in front-line Christian work to get some time away with their family. The distractions of everyday life can become overwhelming and being able to take some time out to be together with each other and listen to God is, in our minds, very precious. The vision took 10 years of preparation and, in May 2011, we were delighted to open our holiday accommodation..."

Their story is a fascinating one and it shows very clearly that when you put your trust in God to help you fulfil something you feel is a calling from God, it can, and does, happen. As a result of their vision, many people have been able to take full advantage of everything that Hazel and Guy provide – a real blessing!

For myself and Colin, it meant we were able to catch up with friends and truly relax – of course it helped that we had wall-to-wall sunshine and were not too far from 'Guy's Creamery', where you can get a selection of delightful treats, usually involving clotted cream!!

Hazel and Guy's 'ministry' is, as they say, part of their 'front-line' work. Now I hope that this term is familiar to you – it should be, because it is part of the L.I.C.C. material that Christ Church has been involved with for some time now. The idea is that being a Christian is not just about worshipping together for an hour on a Sunday, it's about what we do for the rest of the week. We all have a 'front-line' – somewhere we put our faith in action – and, whether it's the supermarket queue or a chat with a neighbour or full/part-time employment, we have so many opportunities to tell people about the love of God in Christ Jesus and our walk with Jesus, as we seek to be Christ to those we meet. However, something dropped through my letterbox this morning which reminded me of how important 'front-line' work is – especially now.

L.I.C.C. regularly send out publications for us to read, and inwardly digest, and their latest missive is an updated booklet called *'The Great Divide'*. Written by Mark Greene, it is said to be the biggest challenge facing the church today and the booklet addresses the issues that affect so many.

Greene writes:

'The great divide is the all-too-common belief that some parts of our life are sacred and really important to God – prayer, Sunday services, church-based activities – but that others are secular and irrelevant to God – work, school, university, sport, the arts, music, rest, sleep, hobbies. It's a lie that distorts God's character and severely limits our everyday enjoyment of him. Tragically, it also severely limits our understanding of our everyday role in God's purposes.'

Green comments that, because of this sacred-secular divide, we see that the vast majority of Christians do not feel equipped for mission in their daily context – and, despite the fact that over the last 30yrs the UK church has rolled out many initiatives in evangelism and social action, youth work and resource development, the number of people regularly attending our churches has plummeted. To quote: *'Monthly UK church attendance has declined markedly – from 8.5% of the population in 1990, 7.1% in 2000, 6.6% in 2010 to 5.4% (pre-covid) in 2020.....Globally, almost every Western nation has seen significant decline over the last twenty years.'*

It doesn't take a genius to see this in our own churches locally but Greene asks us to imagine what the situation might be if all God's people – kids, teens, students, workers, parents, carers, volunteers, unemployed, retired – had been envisioned for our mission and ministry, where we naturally engage with people who don't know Jesus day by day – in person or on Zoom!

To this end, we need to equip ourselves for ministry on our front-line – and this can be done by embracing the riches of the whole-life-gospel/discipleship/worship/mission.

This week, a small group of folks from Christ Church will engage in the last of the ‘Learning Hub’ sessions on ‘Seasons of Life’ and the ‘Whole-life Worship Journey Pack’, which I hope to use in our Sunday worship (which may have to wait until we can all gather safely in worship together, as I don’t want anyone to miss out on this opportunity to enrich their discipleship). However, in the meantime, I encourage everyone to enquire, seek out, read, discover, whatever it takes to help you on your ‘Frontline’.

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

Word for today Mark 5: 21-43

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say,
‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’
But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue,
‘Do not fear, only believe.’

(Mark 5: 35,36)

Meditation of Jairus

They were thinking not just of **him**, but of me too – wanting to spare me getting my hopes up only to have them dashed.

I’d set off that day, hoping against hope, believing that, if anyone could help my daughter, it was Jesus – the talk of the town. So, imagine my joy when he agreed to come with me, my frustration when he was distracted by that woman touching his cloak, and then my despair when news came through that my daughter had died.

It was too late for help, too late for anything – there was nothing now that anyone could do.

At least that’s what we assumed until Jesus carried on regardless, striding into the house, shooing away the mourners and calmly commanding, *‘Little girl, get up!’*

And the astonishing thing is, she **did** – can you believe it! Quick as a flash she was up and about, as if nothing had happened, right as rain.

He’d defeated death itself, my daughter brought back to life and we were overcome with gratitude, relief and delight.

They tell me he promises the same for us all: that we, too, can rise again.

Can it be so?

Can the last enemy truly be conquered, its power destroyed?

I don’t know how even Jesus could do that; but I don’t need to know, for I saw my daughter raised and that’s good enough for me.

‘Do not fear,’ he said, *‘only believe’*, and, despite my doubts, my many unanswered questions, Lord, I **do**.

Prayer

Gracious God,

you tell us not to fear but to believe,
to trust that, whatever we’re called to face, in life or in death,
you are able to see us through.

We **try** to believe, truly want to, but we struggle at times,
for so much in the world seems to challenge our faith,
denying your loving purpose.

We know that not every problem is resolved as we would wish,
that healing is not always granted,
that catastrophe can strike at any time and that death comes finally to us all,
and it casts a shadow over our hopes,
leaving us afraid and uncertain.

Teach us that though commitment to you brings no immunity from life’s ills,
no guarantee of a trouble-free path,
you will be there to help, come what may,
ready to strengthen, comfort, support and sustain.

Help us truly to believe in your transforming power, now and always.

Amen

Word for today, Meditation and Prayer from ‘A most amazing Man’ by Nick Fawcett

Gathered for Prayer....

...meets at **9 am and 7 pm each Wednesday, until the 21st July** when we will break for the summer.
Please do feel free to come and join in this time of prayer and space to rest in God's presence.
Here's the link....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPVOZJNndRWVVKwWdvand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM

Other news....

A big debt of gratitude is owed to **Sheila Palmer** for her many years leading the Parent and Toddler Group at Christ Church. She has now decided to hand over the reigns to well, as yet we do not know!!



Her very able assistants are willing to carry on this valuable work, but will need someone to co-ordinate.
So, if you feel that this is something you could do, please let myself or Debbie Mabbitt know, so that things can be put in motion for a re-start (possibly) in September.

Sheila – many, many thanks for all you have done with the group. I hope that Christ Church will continue to have the benefit of your talents in other areas of church life!! Helen <><

Open House @ Beth Salem

Due to the Government announcing a delay in the further easing of Lockdown,
Colin and I have had to **delay our 'Open House' sessions on the 1st and 3rd Sundays, from 2pm – 5pm.**
These will now commence on the 1st August – weather and government decisions permitting!! Helen <><

Face to Faith Bible Reading Group 'Acts Studies'



- **Bible Reading Group at Christ Church on alternate Thursdays 12 – 1:30 pm starting on 29 July 2021**
- **Stay for lunch** (bring your own) after the group for further fellowship
- Speak to **Doreen Field** or **Gill Constable** for more information

Everyone is welcome!

Thank you to all who contributed in any way to the **2021 Christian Aid total of £4,500** for Chichester.

Terry Timblick