

Christ Church News (27)
by and for the Christ Church Family
6th September 2020



Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

It is good to be back with you all after getting my new knee – albeit in a limited capacity as I can't yet drive!! Having gone through it, I now have a new-found respect for anyone who has had joint replacement surgery, with its trials and tribulations. I discovered that you go from elation at having survived the surgery, to despair at trying to make your leg function again amidst a fog of pain and pain-killers, to a sense of accomplishment at the realisation that you can walk unaided, (eventually), and that this 'joint' will eventually feel more like your own but without the constant pain you had before!! I just hope that, when it comes to having my other knee done, it goes as smoothly and as successfully as this one. I would like to thank all those who have brought flowers, sent cards and generally wished me well during my 'confinement' – I have truly felt accepted, welcomed and loved.

Now to get back to the business of getting to know you and being that which you brought me here for!

Helen

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Word for Today Romans 13: 8-14 Matthew 18: 15-20

Reflection

The focus for our readings today is the one thing which can both destroy a relationship and cause irreparable damage to a community. It's something which is a part of life, but often the very thing which we try to avoid at all costs – Conflict!

It's not like we haven't thought or talked about it before - and I suppose the reason it keeps cropping up is because Christ calls us into community...to live and work together for the building of his kingdom – and if disputes and divisions prevent that happening, then does it matter how many times we address it?

Often conflict arises over the smallest of things – a misplaced word, a rumour overheard, an assumption taken to heart, an argument unresolved.

Let me illustrate what I mean by telling you a story....

Once upon a time, there were two brothers. Their father had a large farm and, when he became too old to work, he called his sons to him.

"I am too old to work anymore," he said. "I will divide my farm and give each of you one half....and I know that you will always work together and be good friends."

When the two brothers first started working their adjoining farms, they were the best of friends and would share everything together. Then, one day, they had an argument and stopped speaking to one another. For many years not a word was spoken between them.

One day, one of the brothers was at his house when a carpenter came to his door and said, "I would like to do some work....do you have anything that I can do?"

The brother thought for a moment and then replied,

"Yes, I'd like you to build a fence on my property. Build it down near the stream there, which separates my farm from my brother's. I don't want to see or speak to my brother ever again, so I'd like you to build a high fence there please. I'm going into town and I'll be back this evening."

When he came back that evening, he was shocked and horrified to see that the carpenter had not followed his instructions. Instead of building a high fence there, he had built a bridge over the stream.

The man walked down to take a look at the bridge and, as he did, his brother walked toward him from the other side.

His brother said,

“After everything that’s happened between us over the years, I can’t believe that you’ve built a bridge to welcome me back.”

Then he reached out to his brother and gave him a big hug. The brother then walked back up to his farmhouse to talk to the carpenter.

“Can you stay?” he asked. “I have more work for you to do.”

The carpenter answered,

“I’m sorry, I can’t stay. I have to go because I have many other bridges to build.”

Sometimes we have disagreements with each other – and, when that happens, we often build a fence between ourselves and them.

But that isn't what Jesus wants us to do. **Instead of fences, he wants us to build bridges of love.**

Let’s pray....

Loving God,

sometimes we long to find a place to relax, to lean into the welcome and the love of real friends –

who stay true no matter who we are or what we’ve done.

We want to be known – not just our names, but our ‘selves’, our dreams and longings, our fears and failings, and be warmly, unrestrainedly welcomed.

We yearn to know the joy of opening our arms to others and see them soften in the safety of our acceptance.

And you have created a place like this for us;

a place of people, with failings and disagreements who still look out for one another;

a place of difference and struggle where we can all belong;

a place of faith and deep doubt,

a place of awkward stumbling toward Christ-likeness;

a place of worship, of mystery and of rest.

And though we can’t always see it, and though it sometimes doesn’t feel like it,

we have that place here in our churches.

Not the buildings and the furniture –

no; it’s amongst the people who gather in your name and try so hard to remember each other’s.

And for this place, and your being with us, we give you our heartfelt gratitude and devotion.

Amen.

A Link to the Southern and Islands Learning Network

One of the great things about Christ Church is that it is a Local Ecumenical Church. Therefore, we can all access fantastic resources for our learning and development from the Methodist Church **and** URC.

On this occasion I wanted to share with you **the newsletter 'The Sign'** produced by the Southern and Islands Learning Network Team, Methodist Church UK.

There are a huge range of courses - all free of charge. They are accessed via Zoom, which is very easy to use. Over the last few months I have attended three courses. I have just signed myself up for a couple more this autumn. The Learning and Development Team are certainly very proficient at delivery. I have now met them all, as well as meeting people from wide flung places such as the Channel Islands. This is rather reassuring, as we are in such a strange time where a trip to London seems like quite an adventure. So, please, do click on the link, and have a read, and consider whether you would like to be on the mailing list. I loved the first story and the C S Lewis quote at the end.

Gill Constable

To access The Sign click on the link below:

[Southern and Islands Learning Network](#)