

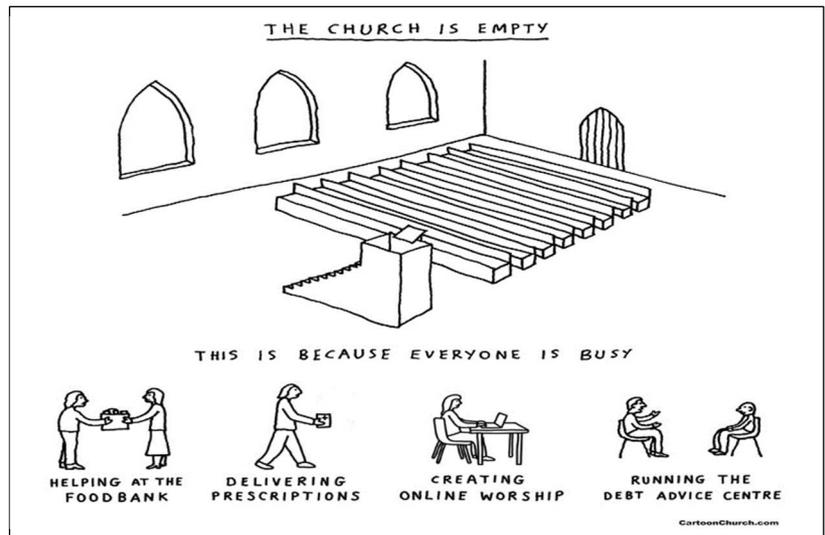
Christ Church News (19)

by and for the Christ Church Family

12th July 2020

Dear Friends,

I think it would be fair to say that 2020 will forever be the year when things changed. We've had to change how we live, how we socialise, (or not!), how education happens, how we communicate, etc. Our daily routines are not what they used to be – our churches are not what they used to be – but is this a bad thing? The phrase of the moment seems to be *'the new normal'* – and love it or hate it, we'll probably spend the rest of this year figuring out what that might be! Whatever it will be, the clue is in the word **'new'**!!



Day to day life for each of us might have drastically changed, for better or for worse! In the H-B household we have spent more time together these past few months than at any other time during our married life and 'going back to normal' will mean that, once again, quality time together will be reserved for the odd evening and my day off.

Church life has meant that, for all of us, we've had to spend more time apart – both socially and in worship – and what we go back to is the topic of many discussions amongst people of faith. You see, we have a unique opportunity not to go back to *'business as usual'*, but to change our way of being and doing in new and exciting ways.

Change can be something positive - not comfortable or easy - because it goes from the known to the unknown; but, as long as it is God centred and prayerfully considered, it can be an exciting and wonderful step of faith.

Change can be **Creative, Healthy, Ambitious, Necessary, Graceful, and Evolving** – or it can be **Challenging, Harrowing, Arduous, Negative, Gloomy and Erratic**. Only you can decide which version you want to follow.

Charles Darwin once said, *"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."*

Whilst this may well have referred to the flesh and bone variety of species, I think it is a great way of thinking about the church? We are the body of Christ ... his heart, hands, eyes, ears, and mouth, sharing the Gospel wherever we find ourselves. Never has there been a more crucial time to ask ourselves – *'What Would Jesus Do?'*. During his time as God, incarnate, he wasn't the sort of guy to just 'go with the flow' – he was the radical Jesus - the one who questioned normality and tried to bring in something new. But this wasn't just for the sake of it; there was a purpose, a reason for being and doing!

Whatever our *'new normal'* will be – may it be done through the grace of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, and always in Jesus' name.

Rev'd Helen <><

Word for Today Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

Today, in the lectionary, we begin a series of parables from Matthew about the kingdom of God – and the first one we find, the parable of the sower, is so well known that we often think we've cracked the meaning already – especially as Jesus gives his disciples, (then and now), a fairly conclusive explanation.

But rather than dismiss it because we know it so well – perhaps we ought to do what the big companies do when we've become too familiar with their products – re-brand it!

So how would you re-brand/re-name it so that it would make someone read it or listen to it afresh.....?

The Parable of the Careless Sower

The Parable of the Miraculous Harvest

The Parable of the Helpless, Hapless Seeds

The Parable of the Good Soil

Whatever you call it – Jesus points out that we need to ‘hear’ the message!

This parable, and the ones that follow, come at a critical point in Matthew's story. In chapter 12, Jesus has been under assault by his opponents. The Pharisees, apparently, are not good soil for his teachings to land on. They object when Jesus plucks grain and heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. When he cures a demoniac, who was blind and mute, they accuse him of getting his exorcizing power from Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. The Pharisees have ears but do not hear.

Over and against this opposition, the parables affirm Jesus' divine identity. He both teaches and embodies the mystery of the kingdom of heaven - a mystery "*hidden from the foundation of the world*" but now revealed at this dawning of the final age.

The parable of the careless sower, the miraculous harvest, the helpless, hapless seeds, or the good soil? Which brand name do you prefer? Whichever one you pick, let's try hearing something we've never heard before.

Prayer

The seed of Your kingdom is forever being sown into our lives, our world, O God.

But it doesn't always take root. Sometimes it fails to find a place to grow.

And so we pray...

For ourselves and others when life makes us hard and resistant like a well-trodden path where old habits, old systems and old patterns of thinking keep your message from growing;

For ourselves and others when we become so immersed in the short-lived, shallow, rock-hiding soil of the moment where Your life too easily gets blown away by the wind;

For ourselves and others when our fears, insecurities, desires and self-absorption tangle like thorns around Your grace and choke it into silence;

For ourselves and others when Your truth brings out the best in us and we grow fruitful in compassion and justice in service and worship.

The seed of Your kingdom is forever being sown into our lives and our world, O God;

May it find good soil, may it grow and may it produce a harvest of life, peace, joy and love in us and across the globe.

Amen.

Thank you

While we have been without a minister, we have been very well cared for as a congregation by Derek Wales and Ian Field. How very fortunate we are to have two such experienced, retired ministers in our congregation.

During the past twelve months they have been our local contacts for anyone needing pastoral care and in August and September last year they took five funerals.

We would like to express our grateful thanks to both Ian and Derek for all that they have done to care for us during the past twelve months.

from Pam Parsons on behalf of all of us

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Rev'd Ian Field's ordination..... **Congratulations Ian!!**