

Pastoral Letter #9 | 29th September 2020

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. 13 When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Acts 1: 12-14, NRSV

Dear Friends

I've found the last few weeks frustrating, exhausting and seemingly endless. Frustrating because the coming months are looking even more uncertain than they were looking. Exhausting because it's now been 6 months of trying to make sense of life and ministry in the unknowns of pandemic and restrictions. Seemingly endless because we don't know when this pandemic will end.

God's been encouraging me through the story of the disciples recently. The resurrection comes, they think Jesus is back, and then he returns to heaven, and the disciples are left alone. What do they do? Sure, some of them would probably have felt frustrated, Jesus was here one minute, gone the next, they didn't know what to do next. After the emotional turmoil of the crucifixion, they were probably exhausted & anxious.

What do they do? **They devote themselves to prayer, and to one another.**

I am certain I'm not alone in feeling frustration with where we find ourselves. I wish things were more certain, I wish it were more clear how our church communities were going to look in 3, 6, 12 months' time, I wish it was easier to answer the question some of you have asked recently 'what is Christmas going to look like?'

In the last few weeks, I've noticed some of the frustration we're all feeling bubbling out into our interactions with one another. Let's be honest, the restrictions, as important as they are for safety, are frustrating! But the danger is that left unchecked, we target that frustration towards others rather than acknowledge it ourselves. I feel compelled to challenge us all to reflect on our words, actions and responses in these times and ask if they are showing devotion

to one another and to building up community. Are we ensuring that we are welcoming and including one another in love?

Welcome and inclusion is a big challenge for Christian community at the moment. Those who rely on lip reading can't see through masks, many of those who are housebound or rely on lifts to get to worship cannot get to our buildings, many of our communities are vulnerable and some were shielding, and many of us feel anxious in one way or other. It is hard to even advertise and invite people to worship or other things when there's so much guidance they need to know, and we don't know if we'll have enough seats in our buildings to welcome them. Being church right now is TOUGH!

In their tough time of uncertainty and frustration, the disciples were led to prayer. I encourage you to do the same, asking God to reveal to you encouragement, joy and direction for the future.

May you know the certainty of God's love with you in the coming days,

In peace & hope, Rev Dan



Autumn Light © Dan Balsdon. Even in the wilderness, when the path is unclear, light shines, God is here, take each step with faith and trust.

News & Updates – October 2020

GROW – Colossians

Enclosed you'll find a bible study card for the letter to the Colossians. As promised, we'll be reading this section by section through October, and I'll be sharing some reflections each week at **Together**.

I hope and pray this will be an exciting time to **GROW** in Jesus together.

Together – Changes to Worship on the Phone

**** Important Changes to note! ****

The Worshipping Together booklet for October is enclosed, with details of changes to Worship on the Phone.

We will now meet at **9am on Sundays** – for 2 reasons, I and others can lead at 9am and then attend 10:30 face to face worship, but more importantly, it means that we have an opportunity to all be **Together** – rather than having to choose between phone or face to face.

****Please note that the connection instructions have changed, and now incorporate both phone in and webcam (via zoom). Please look closely at the flyer in the Worshipping Together Booklet****

Circuit Plan

Due to restrictions, we are not printing copies of the circuit plan at the moment, and because of the changeable circumstances we're in, the circuit plan is being published one month at a time. Local plan dates for October are as follows:

	OCT	4 th	11 th	18 th	25 th
Together	9am	Dan Balsdon	Dan Balsdon	Dan Balsdon	Dan Balsdon
Bognor Regis	10:30am	Tony Brazier	Dan Balsdon	John Jennings	Liz Bates
Felpham	10:30am	Dan Balsdon	Sheila Morgan	Malcolm Lindo	Dan Balsdon
Westergate	10:30am	--	--	Dan Balsdon	--

Keeping Warm

As part of the government legislation to be COVID secure, we have to maximise natural ventilation, which means having doors and windows open. We're looking at options as we approach autumn, but encourage you if you are coming to face to face worship to wear an extra layer or bring a blanket.

Local Church Updates

Bognor Regis

Thank you to the many who have stepped into new roles to enable face to face worship to meet safety. Face to Face worship continues on Sunday's 10:30am.

House Group (Fortnightly on Weds, 10:30am) and Church Fellowship (fortnightly on Thurs, 2:30pm) are now meeting in the church, Please contact Anita for info.

Felpham

Thanks to our teams who have enabled face to face worship to meet safety, and to Andy who continues to work on the technology to stream the service into the hall. Face to Face worship continues on Sunday's 10:30am.

Westergate

A letter and draft Risk Assessments have been distributed to Trustees and we will hold a trustees meeting via TeleCall on 9th October to discuss and vote. Depending on the outcome of that meeting, we are working towards 18th October for a first face to face worship. *If you are on the community list for Westergate, an extra letter is enclosed for you which gives more detail.*

Harvest

Due to the workload involved with enabling face to face worship, we haven't been able to make arrangements for the sort of traditional harvest festival celebrations we may be used to. (so I'll have to keep my marrow this year!). However that doesn't stop us giving thanks to God for all he has given.

*Come, you thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home!*

*Fruit and crops are gathered in safe before the storms begin:
God our maker will provide for our needs to be supplied;
come, with all his people, come,
raise the song of harvest home!¹*

If you are able and want to give this harvest, you can give to **All We Can**, (the Methodist Relief and Development fund) via their website. www.allwecan.org.uk.

Alternatively, if you want to give locally donate to **Foodbank or other charities** via supermarket collection points.

Or if you can't get out at the moment, save the thought and give at a later date when you are able!

¹ Come you thankful people come, Henry Alford, StF123