

Littlehampton United Church

Mini
Newsletter 12



Keeping
our church
together

Hope

What are you most hoping for? What does hope look like?

In the last edition I invited readers to send me their ideas. I have to report that Val is delighted with her crop of beans.

At the start of lockdown, when the weekly visit to Tesco was as good as it got, I bought a packet of Dalia tubers. These roots looked pretty dead when first planted but just look at them now!



What does Hope look like? - a memory

Whilst passing the time in lockdown, my brother suggested that we try and document all that we can remember our Dad telling us about his life. We have now reached the war years and actually have official documentation on the retreat to Dunkirk and the evacuation. I recall in 1958 insisting that Dad took us to the cinema to see the film “Dunkirk” starring John Mills, Richard Attenborough and others. Dad was not too keen on re-living some of his memories but agreed that the film was a fair representation of the facts. The next film of the same title starred Richard Branagh as the naval commander at Dunkirk. In one clip his character is standing on the “mole” scanning the horizon through his binoculars. All the warships involved in the evacuation appear to have left and the feeling on the beaches is that the army has been forgotten. Then the Commander, pauses his scan. Something has caught his gaze. The General standing along side him asks “What do you see?”

He replies, as the flotilla of little ships comes into sight, “I see hope”.



From the Minister's desk

This is my last letter as the lockdown eased to go back to church!

This is the last letter before we beginning the journey into the mission excursion of what will be the “new normal” of doing church. The “new normal” comes with magnitude of challenges similar to the lock down that made many of our Christian communion of the brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus to miss the coming together for fellowships midweek, and the Sunday divine worship in the buildings that was part of the Christian life before the lock down due to coronavirus.

Probably a hypothetical question to ask is, how much do we trust in God as the lock down is eased and the people of God gather for worship without singing. As you all know singing has been the king pin at the back drop of our traditional way of worship. The Bible is full of references where worship was defined by the following without singing and one example is; *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)*

The worship of God without singing was part of the Old and New Testament church but to us this is a “new normal” and we need to seize this opportunity and let God of all Ages take control as He guides us through His unfailing love by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are therefore called to discipleship to trust in Him because He is the Way, Truth and the Life, (John 14:6).

Lastly, this is for your diaries: 1. St Andrew URC will open the church building for worship on the 9th August 2020; Emmanuel URC 16th August 2020; Littlehampton United Church depends on the building works but now pencilled for 6th September 2020. These times will be confirmed by the church Secretaries of each congregation. I hope and pray to see you all for the “new normal” worship services. May I call on you to continue in prayer for the “new normal” as it unfolds.

Naison M Hove.

23/07/2020.

One more person who provided me with something about **hope**.

His name is Matthew and between AD 65 and 80 he recorded on parchment messages of hope that he may have heard directly from Jesus.

Matthew 14.13-21 Hope for young people

By inspiring a young boy to share his food, Jesus prevents a large crowd from dispersing. People were shocked when the schools were closed in March and when GCSEs and A Levels were cancelled, depriving large numbers of teenagers from the opportunity to gather together and celebrate their results in the usual way. Being together is important, which is why Jesus wanted to prevent the crowd from dispersing here. The way in which he achieved this offers hope to the Church that, despite the separation during this year, we can stay together spiritually, even when physical meetings are impossible. What keeps the crowd together is an act of generosity, significantly the response to Jesus of a young person. Our enforced separation has taught us the value of staying together; this passage shows us how we might do this in the times ahead, following the lead of the young, sharing our time and resources with one another.

Matthew 14.22-33 Hope for church leaders

Jesus invites Peter to make himself vulnerable as a demonstration of faith. The life of the Church has changed dramatically this year with rules around social distancing and public gatherings. Change may be necessary sometimes, but it is also frightening, because it can make us vulnerable. None of us wants to perform an action that ends with a cry of 'Lord, save me' issuing from our lips. However, this Bible passage shows us that when Jesus invites us to 'come', this is often an invitation to vulnerability. Peter demonstrates this when he begins to sink, but he also demonstrates that our hope in these situations lies in keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. We may be called to risky or scary actions, so we must keep looking to Christ so that our faith in him may conquer doubts about our own capabilities. Church leaders are encouraged to reflect on how church leadership has altered over the past five months. Has this left you feeling vulnerable, more susceptible to the risk of sinking as Peter did? What are the practical ways in which you keep your focus on Jesus so that you can continue to lead the church in these changing times?

Matthew 16.13-20 Hope for the whole Church

By recognising who Jesus truly is, Peter becomes foundational in the building of the Church. Our church communities have had to find new ways of meeting over the past few months; in cyberspaces rather than physical spaces, expressing togetherness in new and sometimes alien ways. This has led to us asking questions about what it means to be Church. This Bible passage finds Jesus investing his hope in Peter as the rock on which the Church will be built. It's interesting that Jesus' rock was not a rock at all, but a person. Our church buildings, impressive as many may be, are, by way of contrast, not people but merely rocks. Simon Peter was a person, but he was a person who recognised Jesus' true nature; this is what made him a suitable foundation stone for the future Church.

This article is based on information printed in "Roots" magazine, published by Roots for Churches

This newsletter was written and edited by Chris Azzaro, who can be contacted on 01903 718070 or by email: christopher.azzaro@sky.com

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome

There is also information about our church on the website:

News of the Family

Dawn is hoping that her move to Abingdon will take place in the first or second week in August. We all wish her well and pray that all goes smoothly.

The Re-opening of our church

Anyone who has passed by the church recently will be aware that much work is going on. Turning Tides are getting on with alterations to the interior of the manse to make it suitable for their purposes. Meanwhile, in the church, Malcolm has been getting on with redecoration. The repairs and alterations required in the coffee lounge and knight hall continue. Completion is expected in early September. The property committee have worked hard to get the work completed while we are not able to meet for worship, thus avoiding even more disruption.

So when do we think that we could safely meet for worship? And what will a “service” be like?

First of all there are government stipulations that churches are required to follow: No singing or responses, social distancing, (which will limit the number of worshippers to about 20), records of worshippers maintained in case track and trace is required, one way system for entry and exit, and wiping down of seats and surfaces. Hand sanitiser stations. There will be no refreshments or handshakes and worshippers will remain seated at all times, wearing their masks.

The Leadership team are working hard to produce a plan—seating, entrances and exits, appropriate notices and floor markings and ensuring all is safe for worshippers, stewards and preachers. Remember that most of us are in the 70+ category and considered to be most at risk should we become infected with the virus, so we do need to be meticulously careful. With all this in mind, we are tentatively aiming at early September.

There will be another newsletter in August when we will have more details available.

Luke 18:9-14 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Then he told this parable to those who were confident in their own Coronavirus preventative measures and looked down on a tax collector. “Two men went to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee; the other a Tax Collector. The Pharisee prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like everyone else, especially not that tax collector more than six foot over there! For I wash my hands twice an hour and give a tenth of all my toilet paper away. I also report all my neighbours when they break the quarantine requirements.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance, his face in his hands, not daring to look up to Heaven and said, ‘God have mercy on me, for I have just touched my face with my hands.’ I tell you that this tax collector rather than the other went home right with God. For the proud shall still catch the virus, but the humble won’t be such jerks about it.”

*Translator: John Spencer from The Coronavirus Bible: Revised Satirical Version .
Kingdom Collective Publishing. Kindle Edition. Available from bit.ly/cvBible*