



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'SUSPENDED CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 28th February 2021



NEWS UPDATE

Tuesday evening Zoom with Capernwray Bible School Students



This Tuesday, 2nd March, our Tuesday evening zoom will be led by some young students from Capernwray bible school near Carnforth. Their names are Jess, Karis, and Fynn, and they are very enthusiastic about meeting with us to share in our journey through Philippians.

Restarting of Gathered Church Services – Sunday 14th March

With covid cases having come down, and restrictions being slowly lifted, we intend to recommence gathered church services on Sunday 14th March, which is Mothering Sunday. Social distancing and face masks will need to continue for a while to come, but this is at least a step in a positive direction. Thursday morning Communion services will commence later in the same week, 10.30am on Thursday 18th March.

Retiring Collection for Malcolm Dove

What Malcolm doesn't know is that his version of this newsletter is different to everyone else's! Following the announcement last week that Malcolm will be stepping down as treasurer, we would invite you to donate to a collection so that we can get him a nice farewell gift. I have in mind commissioning a professional piece of artwork, though we will see what donations we receive and choose something accordingly.



Practically speaking, taking up a collection presents challenges at the moment. If you would like to donate cash you could contact Hilary or myself and we will arrange to collect it from you. Online donations can also be considered, however if payments are made to the Church PCC bank account, Malcolm will see it! The only solution is to make donations through another person's bank account. I am happy to use my personal bank account to this end, however I would request that any payments made in this way are accompanied by an email to myself, Hilary, and Debra, so that there is accountability. If you would like to donate to the collection using this method then get in touch and I will send you the bank details.

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Ending of T-2Gether

In May 2012 T-2gether opened its doors to the community, and from that day it happily grew into a celebratory monthly event which has continued for nearly 9 years. I would like to take this opportunity to all of the people who came along, and supported us.

So it is with great sadness that after much deliberation, and discussions I must announce that as from 31st March 2021 T-2gether will come to an end.

We have shared some wonderful memories, and birthdays over the years, and have enjoyed the company of everyone who came along to join us.

Our best wishes to everyone from all the T-2gether Team.



BIBLE READING – Philippians 3: 1-11

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE – written by Jim Cam



The Joy of Knowing Jesus

All you need is Love



The title of one of the pop songs made famous by The Beatles in the 1960's (I'm old enough to remember) expresses one of the most basic of human needs we have, the need to know we are loved.

It is part of what it is to be human. When we know it for ourselves it can be a source of great joy from which we can gain a deep sense of personal worth and value.

Seeking to be loved by another though can lead us down less helpful roads when seeking self-fulfilment.

When someone debases themselves in pursuit of love or continually strives to justify being loved by another, this can become unhealthy, even harmful, both to themselves and those around them. Narcissistic love which seeks to be the centre of attention and adoration by all is definitely not a healthy love!

When we come to think about our faith and how we respond and relate to God, then how we view His love is crucially important.

What Counts?

The Bible teaches us that God is holy, loving, and merciful but not neutral or indifferent when it comes to sin and wrongdoing. We on the other hand, although made in his image, if we honest with ourselves, know deep down we are not perfect. So how do we resolve us relating to a perfect, holy, and loving God?

We can try 'being good enough' by seeking to add things that tip the scales more in our favour, with varying degrees of success or failure, but in the end we'll always fall short. If we see God's love as having to be earned, thereby continually striving to come up to some standard worthy of being loved, well there will always be that lingering sense that we haven't quite got there. Worse still, if we start to think we have already arrived at acceptance through our own merits, then we really are in deep trouble!

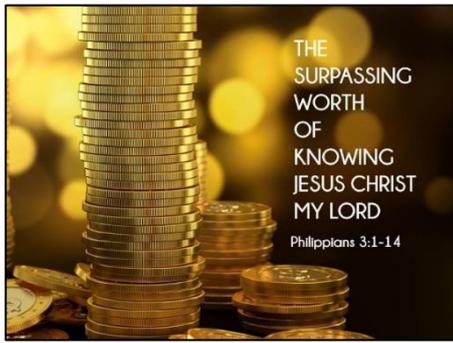
St Paul wrestled with this in his faith in a holy God, and how he viewed where he stood in relation to him? He'd jumped through every 'religious hoop' known to him.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet in the light of what he'd come to know of God's love and grace revealed in Christ he concluded...

...whatever gains I had; these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The Surpassing worth of knowing Christ



Receiving and knowing Jesus and following him is what counted to Paul. Jesus was the source of Paul's righteousness, his right standing with God. Jesus was the source of Paul's joy.

Jesus is to be the source of OUR joy.

We all need to know we are loved. All we really need is God's love, personified in Jesus. On the cross Christ dealt with all that would count or weigh against us. We don't earn God's love by being good or religious enough. Christ on the cross tips the balance of the scales taking away our sins and adding on our side his righteousness.



God loves us and *has demonstrated this in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.* (Romans 5.8)

At the end of the day, it is all down to God's grace shown in Christ.

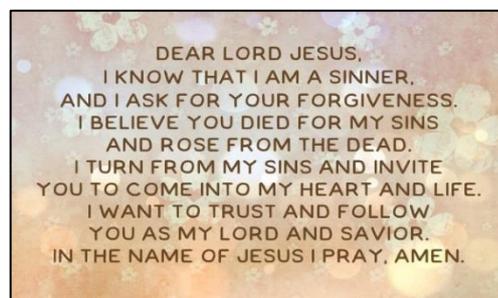
Our response to God's grace and love in Christ

We can only come to him, just as we are, and humbly and accept and receive his love, receive him who loves us so much that he went to the cross for us. The old hymn "Just as I am" speaks of our response.

The first and last verses read:

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| 1. Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God I come | 6. Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come. |
|--|---|

Many of you may be already well aware of all this and have responded to God's love and are continuing to grow in your relationship with Jesus. But for any who '*have been tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without*' then know that he will '*receive, will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve*' as you put your faith and trust in him. This simple prayer is then offered to any who feel they wish to use it.



And there's more!

Having asked Jesus into our lives he promises to be with us by the power of the Holy Spirit, making possible a living relationship with as our Lord and Saviour as we then seek to follow him.



In that relationship we gain great joy, sins forgiven, new life, a living relationship with Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of life everlasting with him.

Joy, Joy Joy!



All we need is love!
Accept God's love,
Know God's love in Jesus.
He is all we need.

May we be joyful in the Lord, seeking to honour and follow him in our lives, and proclaim him with joy to others. AMEN. AMEN. AMEN.

Prayers – Written by Joyce Willacy

JUST AS I AM

God of every time and place, you hold each moment and shape each day.
Thank you for all the gifts you've given us: our lives, our loved ones, all that we have
and all that we are.



Lord, I draw my strength from your endless love and live in your limitless grace, trusting in you.

For when I am at my weakest, your strength is strongest.

Be my patience when I'm frustrated, my endurance when I'm tired.

Be my wisdom when I'm uncertain, my inspiration when I'm out of ideas.

Be my peace when I feel hurt, my comfort when I'm overwhelmed.

Be my energy when I'm weary, my guide when I'm confused.

Be my forgiveness when I get it wrong.

This day, this hour, moment by moment, Lord, I lean on you. I come to you – just as I am.

Thank you that you accept me – just as I am.

Lord, we come to the cross... **in your mercy, hear us.**

JUST AS OTHERS ARE

Lord, you accept me and you love me just as I am.

But sometimes it's hard to know that you also love and accept those people who've hurt me.

Help me to love and accept – and forgive them – Lord, just as you love and accept me.

God of grace, you make me softer, kinder, gentler, more generous, forgiving and loving.

Yet at times I know these gifts wear thin.

I feel impatience and resentment rising, and revenge is on my lips.

So I pray today and every day for more of your Spirit.

Lord, come into my life today.

Let me be your face that lightens the world around me;

let me be your eyes that see those in need and at risk,

and your hands that touch with gentleness and love.

Let me be your feet that go to the places of need,
and your heart to love and care, especially for those, whom I find difficult to love.
Send your Holy Spirit to work through me; so that my life may be a place, where you are visible.

Lord, we come to the cross... **in your mercy, hear us.**

JUST JESUS

Loving Lord Jesus, you gave your life for each one of us.
We pray for the outpouring of your Spirit upon our church.
Make it a place of love, a place where your word will be not only proclaimed, but truly lived.
Make us passionate followers of Jesus, rather than passive supporters.
Make our church a place of radical discipleship and a signpost to heaven.
Reshape us until, in generosity and faith, we are truly Christ-like,
then – in us, through us, and *in spite of* us – we may be the seeds of your Kingdom here on earth.
Lord, push back the limitations of *our* hopes and push us firmly into the great adventure of *your* future.

Lord, we come to the cross ... **in your mercy, hear us.**

SICK & BEREAVED

We pray for those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, for those who have no self-esteem
and who struggle to believe that they could ever be loved or accepted.

Lord, ease their pain and sustain them in your love,
bring light into their darkness and grant them your joy and peace.

O Lord our God, who alone holds the power over life and death,
we pray for our brothers and sisters who have gone before us,
encouraged us by their example, strengthened us by their fellowship and acceptance.

Lord Jesus, be with those who mourn,
comfort them with the knowledge of your love, which is stronger than death.

Help them to cast all their cares on you,
knowing that the grave holds no power over those who trust in you.

Lord, we come to the cross ... **in your mercy, hear us.**

END

O Lord, You are the light that guides my feet, you are the map that gives me direction.
You are the peace that makes me strong, you are the leader, whom I faithfully follow.
By the gentleness of your Spirit, transform us; with the gifts of your Spirit, renew us and equip us;
in the boldness of your Spirit, send us out to serve you,
that we might be your agents for transforming our community and the world.

Merciful Father ... **accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**