



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'CATCH-UP CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 18th October 2020



NEWS UPDATE

Business as usual for Churches...

As our county moves into tier three of pandemic restrictions, we are advised that this does not affect the provision of church services. The growing number of covid 19 cases is a reminder to us all to be vigilant and careful in the way that we practice our safety measures, whether at church or in any other public place. Please do stay away if you have cold or flu symptoms, and let us know if you or anyone else you are in contact with has tested positive for the virus.

Cleaner Living Tip – Ethical Banking

The notion of 'ethical money' may sound like a contradiction, but the choice of where you save your money could mean the difference between whether your hard-earned personal finance is funding the manufacturing of cluster bombs and climate change, or renewable energy and positive social projects.

Most people choose their banks or building societies for reasons of convenience – because there's a branch around the corner, or because we've always used that bank. Few people are asking questions about the way our banks behave, and the impact this has on the care of our planet.

The big banks have a notoriously bad history. Even in the last five years, banks have been condemned for funding rainforest destruction, for their involvement in highly controversial projects which damage the environment, and for lending to governments of the world's poorest countries so they can buy expensive military equipment (to name a few). By supporting an ethical, alternative bank you are ensuring your money doesn't fund fossil fuels, human rights abuses, and other questionable investments.

So which bank or building society should you choose? Some mutual building societies don't take business customers, so they can never fund dubious business practices. For example the Coventry, Yorkshire, and Leeds do not lend commercially. The 'Good Shopping Guide' has produced an ethical comparison score for all the banks and building societies which is below. I'm afraid big high street banks do not come out on top.

Charity Bank	100	Ethical Company Index Score	Coventry Building Society	78	Ethical Company Index Score	Atom Bank	61	Ethical Company Index Score	Citibank	33	Ethical Company Index Score
Ecology Building Society	94	Ethical Company Index Score	AIB	72	Ethical Company Index Score	Bank of Ireland	61	Ethical Company Index Score	Halifax	33	Ethical Company Index Score
Triodos Bank	94	Ethical Company Index Score	Metro Bank	72	Ethical Company Index Score	N26	61	Ethical Company Index Score	Lloyds Bank	33	Ethical Company Index Score
Leeds Building Society	83	Ethical Company Index Score	Monzo	72	Ethical Company Index Score	thinkmoney	61	Ethical Company Index Score	Barclays	22	Ethical Company Index Score
Nationwide Building Society	83	Ethical Company Index Score	Newcastle Building Society	72	Ethical Company Index Score	Cater Allen	39	Ethical Company Index Score	First Direct	22	Ethical Company Index Score
Skipton Building Society	83	Ethical Company Index Score	Starling Bank	72	Ethical Company Index Score	Revolut	39	Ethical Company Index Score	HSBC	22	Ethical Company Index Score
The Co-operative Bank	83	Ethical Company Index Score	Virgin Money	72	Ethical Company Index Score	Santander	39	Ethical Company Index Score	Natwest	22	Ethical Company Index Score
Yorkshire Building Society	83	Ethical Company Index Score	TSB Bank	66	Ethical Company Index Score	Bank of Scotland	33	Ethical Company Index Score	RBS	22	Ethical Company Index Score

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ENJOY – ENGAGE – ENCOURAGE – EMPOWER

This week Jim Cam brings us a message on the third topic of our series – ENCOURAGE. The accompanying bible reading is a short passage from Paul's letter to the Romans.

Bible Reading – Romans 1:7-12

To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Enjoyment and Engagement



In our first week of this series Peter spoke of ENJOYING God. Too often we are so busy DOING things, the daily necessities of life and work, we miss just being still and enjoying God and noticing his provision in the world around us, perhaps in the simplest things like the beauty of a flower or a tree.

One of the benefits of being a grandparent is that I get the chance

to experience or rather re-experience the wonder of things around us through the curiosity, the intense look and sheer excitement in a grandchild exploring the world around them. Our 2-year-old grandson Max is currently fascinated by trees. He has a compulsion to want to walk up to trees in a park or woodland and

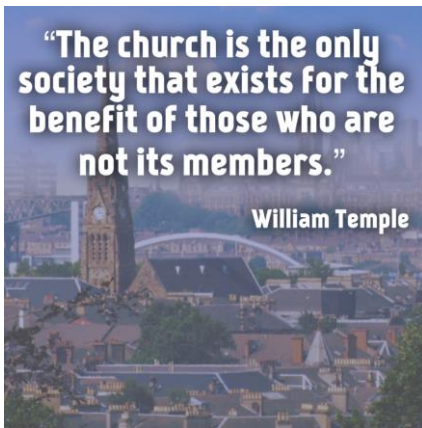


touch their bark and push at their trunks, and look upwards at their spreading branches above him.

Grandma and granddad of course have to join in. As for shuffling through fallen autumn leaves, well, his whole body and arms shake with his excitement and glee.

As we heard the 1647 Westminster shorter catechism stated: “*Man's chief aim is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever.*” We are meant to enjoy God as his children.

Last week Peter spoke of the need to ENGAGE with others out in the world whilst still remembering to ENJOY the Lord. I was minded to recall something Archbishop William Temple said. William Temple



was admired and respected for his scholarly writing, his inspirational teaching and preaching, for his constant concern for those in need or under persecution, and for his willingness to stand up on their behalf. He had said, *“The church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.”* We as part of the church have a call to seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those who as yet do not know God. We are not to disengage or retreat into our own church bubble, but to engage.

How should we go about that? Peter encouraged us to engage “Strategically, Lovingly, Patiently, Positively, Truthfully, and Persuasively, starting from where we are.”

The Difference Encouragement can make

Today we are looking at ENCOURAGE. Thinking of an example of a time when the encouragement of someone made all the difference to me, I was minded to remember my swimming instructor, Mr Siviour. He taught us Junior School children how to swim. He was based at the local public swimming baths to which our school took us to each week.

He started us off by taking us through exercises to build up our confidence in water, beginning with holding onto the sides of the pool, learning to kick and move our legs with the basic leg movements for the breast stroke. Then, holding polystyrene boards in front of us and doing the leg movements we progressed to being able to get across from



one side of the pool to the other. One of the most challenging things for me was learning to float. Taking that step to lie back and use the side to side arm movements took a leap of faith to trust in Mr Siviour's instructions. Well with encouragement I did. The water support did buoy me up and amazingly I didn't sink.

I can't quite put my finger on just what it was about him that helped me and the others learn from him. My dad said he'd been a sergeant in the army. Well he did have a well-trimmed moustache that had that smart clipped military look to it and his posture was always very upright. But he had a gentle, encouraging style that enabled us to trust and follow his instruction and learn the right movements so we could float and then go on to swim with some confidence. He had a real gift of encouragement that really helped his pupils.

Through his encouragement and instruction week by week I gained the ability to swim further and further distances, culminating in me gaining the Mile Certificate. Not only that, we learned and passed the Life Saving Certificate. How many lives that man saved by his patient teaching and encouragement of children to swim and rescue others, only the Lord knows!

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Well done to all those who managed to keep their heads above water and maintain worship and a sense of church community. The weekly video did prove technically demanding and time consuming to produce but some of the expertise gained has found its application in our ongoing church worship and communications.

But this call to ENCOURAGE is not to be the preserve of the few. It challenges ALL OF US to consider ways in which each of us can seek to practise and offer encouragement and support to one another and those we meet on life's ways. When you do, amazing things can happen.

During that first wave lockdown a network of telephone callers were organised to give up to six others a regular, friendly 'How are you' call. Now I am aware that some individuals had already been in the habit of ringing some individuals long before the pandemic struck; but now more have been drawn into this 'keeping in touch' activity.



All this has been a real positive encouragement in the midst of these challenging times, a silver lining to the gloomy Covid-19 cloud. No doubt these positive actions will have benefits long after the pandemic is over, as part of how we 'do church'.

Playing our Part

Yes, there will be those who are specially gifted with the ability to encourage and draw alongside others struggling with faith in the choppy waters of life's sea. But each one of us can seek to play our part in being encouraging, making our local church truly a family and community of encouragement by listening to others, by sending a little message, by offering to pray for someone (and letting them know that we are doing so), by patting folk on the back (speaking metaphorically of course at present), and by giving support when needed.

In this morning's reading St Paul spoke encouragingly to the Christians in Rome, praising them for their faith. He acknowledged that he valued them and longed to be with them, not only to be able to share *WITH* them but also to receive *FROM* them, that they may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

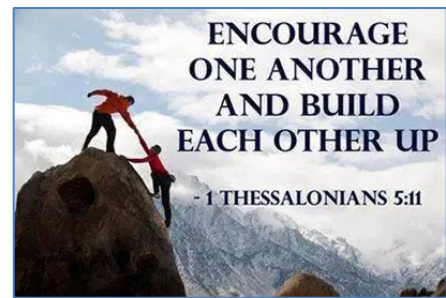
I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Romans 1. 11-12

Ultimately Paul got his wish to be with them in Rome, but as a prisoner for Jesus Christ's sake awaiting trial and ultimately faced martyrdom. But in all his many letters or epistles he wrote, it was to encourage the Christian Churches and help to build them up in the faith.

I'll leave you with this verse from Paul's letter to the Christians in Thessalonica. They were in it together, and so are we! Be a player, not a spectator.

So, may the Lord encourage, stimulate, and encourage us by his Spirit to do just this to his praise and glory. Amen.



Prayers – Written by Peter

Lord God, we thank you for all the people who have encouraged us in our lives.

For those who believed in us, and supported us patiently, enabling us to learn and flourish.

Make us ready to do the same for others.

Lord in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, may we understand what it is to give and receive encouragement.

Show us practically what it means each day to encourage other people.

We thank you for those who have a special gift in this area,

and we pray that the whole church would learn to be encouraging

so that we may be build each other up.

Lord in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, we pray that you would teach us to recognise when people are in particular need of encouragement. May we learn to place ourselves in another person's shoes, and by this to realise what they need in order to be strengthened.

In a moment of quiet, I ask you to show me someone who needs my encouragement today...

Lord in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

Sovereign Lord, we bring before you the needs of our community and of our nation at this time. As pandemic restrictions have been increased, we recognise that many are feeling discouraged, some to the point of despair. We thank you for the support and encouragement that the church community have been able to offer each another, and we pray that this spirit of encouragement would not waver as we endure this long a difficult road. We also pray that those most in need of a listening ear will find support and help.

Lord in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

So may we enjoy, engage, encourage, and empower, as those who seek to honour you each day.

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