

## Church Family Newsletter 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020

Dear Church Family,

We are looking to start 'new normal' services from 13<sup>th</sup> September. Until then our main service will remain online but from the 9<sup>th</sup> August both Frant and Eridge will have services at the usual time (9.30 Frant, 11:15 Eridge) for a said service of readings and prayers, without singing or children's work.

### 'Back to Church' Questionnaire

We would like to know how you are feeling about returning to church services and what is important to you. Would you be able to spend 5 minutes this week filling out our short questionnaire online? One per household. Click here to do it:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/VBX9TXR>

This will help our planning enormously, we really appreciate your feedback.

### Prayers for Lydia Packman

Lydia is the daughter of our previous Rector James and Sarah, and I heard this week has been having seizures, and it would be good to pray for her. I know she was a part of this church since she was one year old (she is now 12) and that you would want to pray for her through this. This is what James and Sarah share:

*We would greatly value your prayers for Lydia. She is having a number of non-epileptic seizures every day, and this has now been diagnosed by the Bristol Children's Hospital as a particular neurological condition. There are lots of possible things that can cause this condition, including a blow to the head, a viral infection and stress - all of which fit with Lydia's recent experiences. Obviously, our hope and prayer is that she recovers, but apparently this can be a lengthy process and there are no certainties. As a family we would really value your prayers that Lydia will make a full and speedy recovery so that she might be free of these seizures. We trust in our Father's good plans for us and feel blessed to have others praying with us. Thank you so much, James & Sarah.*

### Reflection for Today from Reader Roy

#### JOY AND GLADNESS

I am sure that most of us have a collection of souvenirs. Perhaps we have old letters from family or friends, tickets to special events we have enjoyed such as concerts or visits to art galleries and of course old photographs. I was looking at some of my box files recently and lo and I found an old school report. It is a handwritten report signed by my teacher. It records my age at the time – 6 years and 8 months. The teacher has written at the bottom of the report these words 'Roy still tends to be too excitable'. At least I can prove that on some occasion in the past I was happy! But I wonder – can you identify particular occasions when you were really joyful or excited? What have been the happiest days of your lives?

Of course, personal happiness is a popular goal for people today. But it all depends on what we mean by 'happiness'. The American Declaration of Independence contains this statement 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are 'life liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. One

Christian writer has distinguished the 'pursuit of happiness' from the experience of the Christian which she describes as the 'discovery of joy'.

Of course, we have our happy times and our sad times but we need a 'steady constant' at a deeper level to make us settled and happy. The old hymn 'Glorious things of thee are spoken' puts it well. The last verse contains these lines 'Fading is the worldling's pleasure, all its boasted pomp and show; solid joys and lasting pleasure none but Zion's children know'.

Surely as Christians we find ourselves in the right place – the place of settled joy. Psalm 16.11 says 'Thou dost show me the path of life, in thy presence is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore'. Jesus declared himself to be 'the Way the Truth and the Life' – John 14.6. In him we have 'found our way'.

People say 'there's no place like home'. This is our home – when asked 'how it is that you will manifest yourself to us' we read in John 14.23 'Jesus answered him 'if a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'. We are settled and happy in the place where we belong – and we are at home. Most of our time is taken up with the tasks of day to day living. Some may regard all this as routine or even at times monotonous. But because we have 'come home' and belong to Christ we can have a healthy perspective on our 'ordinary' lives. Ecclesiastes 2.24,25 tells us 'There is nothing better for a man than he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also I saw is from the hand of God for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?'

Many people are dissatisfied because they want something they haven't got or they are chasing a dream which is unattainable. As Christians our contentment is real and we are happy in the 'day to day'. Each day is a gift - 'This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it' Psalm 118.24.

When the people of God in the Old Testament were released from their exile in Babylon there was great joy because they were able to recover their independence. Psalm 126 records this experience but it also does point to the emotional and spiritual recovery which is part of the Christian life. 'May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. He that goes forth weeping bearing the seed for sowing shall come home with shouts of joy bringing his sheaves with him' Psalm 126.5,6.

We are on the road to recovery and as we go along where is our focus? Hebrews 12.2 tells us 'looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God'. The 'joy' referred to here is not Christ's own experience on the cross – that was agony and shame – but the joy in prospect was our joy, the result of the finished work of Christ.

So I return to Psalm 126 'The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad'. Psalm 126.3.

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Every blessing,

Rev Brendan