

Church Family Newsletter 5th November 2020

Dear Church Family,

It is of course with deep sadness that we head into another lockdown. Whilst it is so limiting for us, and difficult we can't meet together for the few weeks ahead, we ought not merely focus on our own challenges, but also bear in mind the terrible human tragedy that is continuing to unfold, with 492 people who died from Covid yesterday.

The suffering and loss of so many in our country and world should be our perspective right now as Christians. Jesus had a particular care for the vulnerable and weak, often neglected, and right now they should be uttermost in our mind and prayers as we seek their protection, care and help.

And yet the ministry of the Church continues, and the opportunities to bring the light of Jesus in the darkness continues to grow as more people look beyond this world to God for hope and healing.

As such we have shifted gears quickly to our new lockdown in church, and we would love you to get involved! There is loads happening...

Key thing you can do today: do a video of you/family saying "We will remember them" for our online remembrance service (need by Friday 6th evening - see below for details).

Our churches remain open for private prayer:

Eridge Church: daily

Frant Church: 9am-2pm Wednesdays and Sundays

Online Giving Goes Live, Just in Time!

One of the things we struggled with last lockdown was how to set up giving online.

We receive not insignificant funding through the offering in church, and this is now impossible and even difficult when we do meet.

We have now enabled a new way of setting up one off gifts and ongoing gifts online here, which is secure and enables you to give by direct debit in the same way you pay for other things.

Would you consider setting up a regular gift? I know a number of people at Festival Church asked how to give now, and we have finally set this up.

Get involved!

Give online here: <https://frantchurch.churchsuite.com/donate/>

See our 2020 vision here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awgqUkvo7iE&t=9s>

This Sunday: Remembrance Sunday From 10:45am online

It is with deep sadness we are having to cancel our remembrance service in our churches. However, we are planning to make our online service the best we have ever done for it! I actually really think this online service is like a time capsule in the life of our village, and I can imagine school children in many years looking back to how we did things in 2020 and looking at this service.

Get involved!

- **Film yourself (and family) saying "we will remember"** (you can do this on a phone) and at the point in the service where everyone says "we will remember, we will include the videos before the two-minute silence – please send by Friday evening!

Email Ed: frant youth@gmail.com

Whatsapp: 07450097886

- **Share the service** with neighbours and share on Facebook to help ensure our whole community can easily find our service.

This service could be a key moment for people to engage with God in 2020.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDtsdqyqX6S8yZZI5S-pK6Q>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/frantchurch>

A month of Prayer and Fasting

Our Archbishops have called us to prayer and fasting:

"Bearing in mind our primary vocation as the Church of Jesus Christ to pray and to serve we call upon the Church of England to make this month of lockdown a month of prayer. More than anything else, whatever the nation thinks, we know that we are in the faithful hands of the risen Christ who knows our weaknesses, tiredness and struggles and whose steadfast love endures for ever.

Above all we recall people to some of the fundamental spiritual disciplines that shape our Christian life. How we do this is up to each congregation and clergy person. We will publish resources to support you before the first day of lockdown. During the first lockdown we cheered for the NHS every Thursday. During this second lockdown we invite you to fast in a way appropriate to you as well as pray for our nation every Thursday, for its leaders, its health and essential services and all those who suffer"

Get involved! Candle in the window

I would love to restart our "Candle in the window" initiative, every night, put a candle (can be electric one) in your window and say a prayer. We remember the suffering and lost, and look to God in hope.

We would love you again to send in videos of you lighting (or putting battery) candles in your window and saying a prayer. If we could have 30 people do this, then we could have one every day of the month shared on our Facebook page. Ideally film horizontally on your phone, you don't even need your face in it if you would rather

Prayers for inspiration can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-parishes/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer>

Email videos to Ed: frant youth@gmail.com

Whatsapp Ed: 07450097886

Get involved! Fasting Thursdays

Last lockdown we clapped for carers, this lockdown the church is calling us to fast on Thursdays, in whatever way you can. This might mean fasting on social media, to give time for prayer. This might mean not having pudding and dedicating that time to prayer. This might mean skipping meals entirely. It is completely up to you. It might be you want to give up a meal and donate food or money to the food bank in church or online.

Christmas collection: Toiletries for the Women's Refuge

This year has been particularly tough for the Women's Refuge, as it has for many charitable organisations.

Whilst they have been unable to accept donations of second-hand items, they are able to accept new items. So during November, as in previous years, we would like to make a collection of toiletries to present to the Refuge for Christmas.

Get involved!

Donations can be left in Frant Church during opening times:

Wednesday : 9-2pm

Sunday: 9-2pm

We would like to receive donations of everyday-type toiletries, which the Refuge can use throughout the year.

Also, luxury items, which can be used as gifts at Christmas and on other special occasions.

There will be two boxes for donations (for each type) so please separate accordingly, in order to minimise handling of items.

Many thanks for your support.

Churchyard clearing on Saturdays are cancelled but you can go yourself

We will not be gathering of course on any Saturday for clearing and tidying the churchyard, however you are able to do exercise, or go to an allotment on your own, and last lockdown they did confirm that tending the churchyard is allowed as part of that.

Get involved!

If you can help sweep leaves do just turn up any time. If you aren't able to carry the leaves far, then leave them by the path and we can pick them up.

Can you help our community in need?

If you are willing again (or for the first time) to support some of the most vulnerable in our community, perhaps practically, by getting food or medicine, or pastorally, by ringing up those who might be lonely.

Get involved!

Please let Roy Buchanan know – he is coordinating our Community Covid Response.

email the office: office@frantanderidgechurches.org.uk or phone 01892 750791

If you yourself need help – get in touch, we would love to help you.

Shoebox appeal

Much thanks to those who gave towards this. Pat shall be sending a cheque for £300 to Link to Hope, from church and neighbours, providing gifts for the poor and marginalised this Christmas.

Reader Roy's memory verse reflections

Many people expressed to me their appreciation of Roy's reflections during the last lockdown, and you will be glad to know they are back! Starting today (see below) we will each week have some encouragement from him. Slightly different from before, this time he will reflect on some of his favourite verses from the scriptures. We hope spending this little time of reflection on God's word in the week might bring some comfort and encouragement from the Bible to help sustain you through this time.

Every blessing,

-Rev Brendan

Reader Roy's Memory Verse reflections

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart'
Proverbs 3:5

PROVERBS 3.1-12

1 *My son, do not forget my teaching,
But let your heart keep my commandments;
2 for length of days and years of life
and abundant welfare will they give you.*

3 *Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them about your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 So you will find favour and good repute
In the sight of God and man.*

5 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
7 Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
8 It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones*

9 *Honour the Lord with your substance
and with the first fruits of all your produce;
10 then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine*

11 *My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the Lord reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Proverbs forms part of the Wisdom literature in the Old Testament. The major theme of the book of Proverbs is stated at chapter 1.7 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction'.

Chapter 1 gives warnings against the neglect of wisdom and chapter 2 highlights the stability that will come as the result of finding wisdom. Proverbs 2.10 says 'for wisdom will come into your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul'. This stability will be marked by righteousness.

The first verse of chapter 3 sets the tone for this passage urging a childlike trust in sound teaching. 'My teaching' refers to 'tora' or 'the law' and this law is not what we might think of as law. It is not a collection of rules and regulations or statute law which is all about requiring us to follow the 'letter of the law'. The 'law' in the Old Testament is in the nature of guidance or direction. Unfortunately, it was the Pharisees and scribes at the time of Jesus who misrepresented the law and treated it as an external code which became the object of strict religious observance often requiring adherence in minute detail. Jesus had to remind these religious teachers that the law of the Old Testament was about the heart.

Deuteronomy 6.4 says 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might'. Here in the first verse of our passage we see the importance of the Lord's teaching. It should be so much part of our lives that we are more than familiar with it.

Again in Deuteronomy 6 we read from verse 6 'And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise'.

These teachings are seen to be valuable, a precious personal possession. In our passage verse 3 says 'bind them about your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart'. In other words we should live and breathe these teachings. In verse 4 the word 'repute' can be translated 'understanding'. This 'understanding' comes from God.

Proverbs 2.6 says 'For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding'. The wisdom from God shall show us how to live and previously in chapter 2.7-9 the 'moral' results of wisdom are identified. Wisdom shows itself in right conduct. Verse 4 of our passage tells us that the wise man will find favour with God and man which reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 2.52 says 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature; and in favour with God and man'. This comment comes after Jesus has made his first 'public appearance' so to speak when he was 12 years old. Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem after his parents had set off to go home after the annual feast of the Passover. He was sitting with the teachers in the temple. Luke 2.47 says 'and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and answers'. In obtaining this sound wisdom and understanding we are following in the footsteps of Jesus.

We come now to the key verses in this passage. 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart'. This means of course that our trust should not be half hearted. 1 Samuel 12.24 says 'Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you'. Saul is the classic example of someone who did not love the Lord with his whole heart. In 1 Samuel 15 Saul protested to Samuel that he had obeyed God's command and although it is true that Saul followed much of what God told him to do, in the end he took matters into his own hands. Saul was rejected by the Lord.

'Do not lean on your own understanding' is the wording in the Authorised version and these words are rendered in the Revised Standard Version as 'do not rely on your own insight'.

The word 'lean' means to support yourself. 'Trust in the Lord' suggests a state of helplessness on our part which leads us to trust only in God. The word 'acknowledge' has the meaning 'to recognise

or admit the truth of a statement' and also suggests 'being aware of' or 'having fellowship with'. 'Making straight your paths' is more than guidance.

In Isaiah 45 a picture is given of the man who strives with his Master. Isaiah 45.9 says 'Woe to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter'. God responds in a dialogue in the first person at 45.13 'I will make straight all his ways'. God alone can straighten us out.

We often say when faced with a problem 'let's get this straight' and of course we express a hope about criminals that they should 'go straight'. The straightness which this verse describes suggests clarity and truth and uprightness which for us come from following Christ. Verse 7 says we must not be wise in our own eyes. The suggestion is that we cannot be a kind of spiritual 'know it all'.

Romans 12.16 tells us 'never be conceited.' Verse 7 continues 'fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Verse 8 says 'It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones'. In essence verses 7 and 8 tell us that if our mind and will are surrendered to God the whole person will be invigorated. Verse 9 refers to the requirement of making an offering to the Lord. An offering from the herds or flocks or an offering from the crops was required in the law of the Old Testament. The offering signified a serious acknowledgement of God – who He is and all that He has done for us. It was a form of homage and it was an expression of gratitude.

Deuteronomy 26.11 says 'and you shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite and the sojourner who is among you'. Verses 9 and 10 of this passage teach us that we in our turn must provide financial support to Christian endeavours (such as Christian charities) and to support those in need.

The promise of barns and vats which are full symbolises the blessing of God who meets our needs at a spiritual level but it is also an assurance that in terms of our material wellbeing we shall have all we need. The expectation is not a level of wealth which would in fact produce what the accountants would call 'a return on our investment'.

Finally, we are told 'My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof'. The words 'do not despise' mean that we must not reject the Lord's discipline. The natural reaction to hardship is resentment but there is a greater purpose to be found in these hard times and this is what we must look for. This verse says we should not be weary of his reproof. The word 'weary' means 'to shrink from'. Our emotions may recoil but we must train our minds in the wisdom of God and move from our fearfulness (which betrays a lack of trust) to a greater trust in God. Of course, Hebrews 12.11 says 'For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it'