



Bulletin 19

Dear Church!

“If a job’s worth doing, it’s worth doing badly!”

I remember taking a few moments to think that one out when I first came across it and then reflecting that it’s really quite profound and helpful! So often, for fear of not being able to do something perfectly, we fail to aspire to it at all. But if something is worth doing, even though we may not be able to achieve it in all its fullness, what we *can* achieve may still be worthwhile!

In a sense that is our Christian story. What Christ has begun in us; he will one day bring to completion.

“The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”

says Paul to the Thessalonians church¹.

Again, to the Corinthians, Paul writes²,

“Now we see but a dim reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love....”

...and there are our travelling companions of faith and hope and love once again! They take imperfect lives of doubt and failure and fashion them into lives of hope and faithfulness.

I think this sense of ‘having a go’ even if we can’t fully achieve what we would like to, is very important amidst the times in which we find ourselves right now. No way can church be there for us in all its fullness of love, fellowship, care, encouragement and evangelistic endeavour. Yes, we **are** frustrated and, at the conclusion of any act of congregational worship, still feel ourselves wanting for what we have missed - be online or in person. But this is all we can do for now and we need to realise and appreciate the goodness of what **can** be achieved, rather than mourn what can’t.

I think we’ve been very blessed in what we have been able to achieve. Indeed, I think we have made progress in our daily and weekly devotional life which we might not otherwise have made had Covid19 not happened. Later, when we add what we have gained to what we will then be allowed to do in all the fullness of the church, I think we will be further on than we were before all this began. So further blessing awaits us! Be patient, endure these times with faithfulness!

¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:24

² 1 Corinthians 13:12-13

In thinking through some of this, I'm reminded of Paul's letter to the Philippians³, when he says

"...for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

In the midst of his adversity and restrictions (Yes! Paul too was isolated – under Roman house arrest!), he learned to thrive in his Christian life and ministry to others. What an impact **that** made on life today!

So even though there may be mounting frustration as we see infection levels rise, and with them fresh restrictions, let's remain positive and rise to the challenges these bring. The rewards are worth it! We need to resist a temptation that if we can't get what we used to out of church, it's not worth

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the effort. It's precisely in overcoming our frustration and difficulties that we refine our faith! In this regard, I think we have to pray especially for our families with children. It's been a very tough ride for them, and they need every ounce of encouragement from their parents to stick with church, if they are still to know the encouragement they need in their Christian development.

For these reasons we have been reviewing what we have on offer for every age, stage and circumstance of our congregation and, following final consultation and decision making on Monday morning, will hopefully be announcing new initiatives to exploit the freedoms we **do** have to meet with the challenges of our times. These include a special service for youngsters with their families and will also ensure that whatever we do, we will do this together!

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Finally, next week sees our 150th Anniversary of Emmanuel opening for business! We had elaborate plans for celebrations back in February but have since obviously had to postpone these! Nevertheless, we will mark that day online and wait to celebrate in person later!

In the meantime, stay strong in the Lord, *'The One who calls you **is** faithful, and He **will** do it!'*

Praying every blessing in Christ upon you,
Rev Karl

P.S. Don't forget to pray for Ann Hosking & Robin Brown as they are ordained deacon this Sunday at 3.00pm and 5.30pm (respectively) in Exeter cathedral. Details of online streaming on Emmanuel and St Paul's Facebook page. Robin starts his ministry with us the day after, so lookout for him!

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

³ Philippians 4:11-13