

KEEPING CONNECTED 2

29th March 2020



**LET'S CONSIDER
HOW JESUS IS
ALWAYS THE SAME.
WHILE OUR
CIRCUMSTANCES
CHANGE AND LIFE IS
FULL OF 'UPS AND
DOWNS', JESUS
REMAINS CONSTANT,
THEREFORE WE CAN
REST IN HIM!**

READINGS:

PSALM 46

**GOD IS OUR REFUGE
AND STRENGTH**

ACTS CH25 V1-12

**PAUL'S TRIAL
BEFORE FESTUS**



PRAYERS

Thank you Father, for Jesus. Thank you that in him, your goodness and grace towards us is unchanging and unchangeable. Thank You for the many precious promises contained in your Word and for the wonderful hope that they give to us. In these unpredictable and uncertain times increase our faith, help us, bless us, encourage us, and remind us that you hold us in the palm of your hand.

Abba Father, forgive us for our doubts and for all that is sinful within us, cleanse us we ask, and prompt us to trust you and not be afraid.

Take a moment to pray for NHS staff, key workers, those affected by coronavirus, vulnerable children, the elderly or lonely, our government officials, our families and friends, the world and church near and far- lift to God the people and places that lie heavy upon your heart

'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.' Hebrews ch13 v8

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

Look how you have grown!

Dig out some old photographs, of you and the children, have fun looking at how you have all changed over the years. Ask them to think about what their favourite things are, toys, tv shows, food and talk about how they used to like different things when they were younger

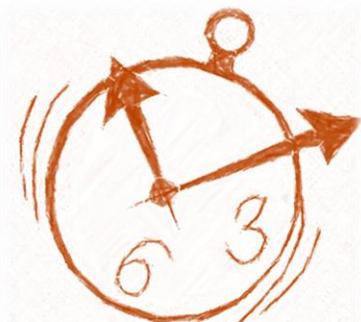
Think about it:

Everything changes, our circumstances and how we feel. Can you think of a day when you felt really good and a day when you felt really bad? What changed to make those days feel like that? Can it be scary living in a world where everything is always changing?

◆ The Bible tells us that no matter how good or bad things are, no matter how many changes we see all around us, Jesus is always the same. Jesus is constantly the one who saves us, our friend and king. We can trust in him. Jesus promises to be with us all the time, not just some of the time. If you ever feel like the

changing nature of life makes the world seem scary, remember that Jesus is a rock that never moves, you can rest in him, talk to him and know that he is right beside you.

Pray: *'Thank you Father that we can trust Jesus because he does not change like everything else. Help us to remember when we are happy, sad, scared, excited or whatever way we feel, he is always there to help us. Amen*



DEVOTIONAL

A rhythm not of our making

Paul having now been imprisoned for two years saw the coming of a new Governor. Festus would prove as interested in Paul as Felix was, but he would also share something else, the desire to keep everyone on board by doing favours for the Jews. Before Felix left he ensured that Paul was kept in prison, later Festus will attempt to send Paul off to Jerusalem, for a show trial, (the Jews actually planned to ambush and kill Paul en route) for the same reason.

The Apostle may well have wished that the coming of a new official would mean a change in his circumstances. He felt it a privilege to suffer for Christ yet he also greatly missed his missionary work which had so shaped and fashioned him since meeting Jesus on the Damascus road that faithful night. However the change that Festus would bring would not be release but the forcing of Paul's hand, he had every reason to doubt his safety in or travelling to Jerusalem, so he cries for appeal, which would mean a journey to Rome.

Think about all that had changed in Paul's life, the ups and downs he had experienced. If we cast our minds back we can see the hardfaced determined Pharisee who would stop at nothing to get rid of the followers of Jesus- moving on we see the Apostle to the Gentiles, the pioneer missionary taking the Gospel across the known world- now we see him in chains, the persecuted and falsely accused. How things change! The rhythm of Paul's life had also greatly altered, no longer was he travelling or studying in the ways he had become accustomed to, he was at the mercy of others now, told where to go, what and when to eat. Paul must have found many days to be long and monotonous, following a routine over which he had no control, subject to a rhythm not of his making.

As this situation that has befallen us continues, while many will enjoy the time at home, having the chance to get some half finished jobs completed, doing a 'clear out' or a bit of domestic reorganisation, many others will find this time a real struggle, perhaps loneliness and worry are far too near and the restrictions of not leaving the house nor meeting with others are difficult to bear. Having the time to sit and think is often a good thing but, when that's all there is to do, we can overthink and instead of finding clarity, we just experience confusion. I wonder was that the plan?- leave Paul to rot, and eventually he will cave in, eventually he would break. Paul would remove everyone's problems if he recanted, or even better, if he lost the plot. However Paul demonstrates great strength, great confidence as he stands his ground.

Paul had such an ability because he had come to understand something of supreme importance- that while the world and our circumstances change on a daily basis, Jesus remains the same. Trusting in him we find the sticking place, the foundation that cannot be shaken. As we await each day, wondering what the news will bring, as some days are long and lonely, as we look back or forward, as we feel content or concerned, let's remember the promises of Jesus, the promises of he who never changes. Maybe use this time to remind yourself of those promises, read through the gospels and see that he promises to be with us always, even to the very end of the age. Through him the grace of God is new to us every morning, no matter what. May that grace allow us to rest, may it carry, strengthen, comfort and remake each one of us, for Jesus is Emmanuel- God with us.

***Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?***

***We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Stedfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.***

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CREGAGH KEEPING CONNECTED

Each Friday morning I will email out an update like this one, which will include a devotional, children's activity, prayer points and readings. These can be hand delivered or posted if necessary if you hear of anyone who is not receiving a copy, or if you know of someone outside of our congregation who might benefit from receiving one please let us know.

PRAYER

The fortnightly Prayer Link will be sent out again from next week, if you have any prayer requests please pass them on, if you do not receive the Prayer Link but would like to via email or printed copy please let me know

OPEN CHURCH

The church will be open for private solitary prayer on Fridays 10am-12noon, please feel free to come, following all necessary social distancing practices. I will be available during that time. Those who have signed up for vestibule duty are not required to be there. There will also be printed copies of this update available on the coffee bar for anyone who might find them useful.

BIBLE STUDY

If you would be interested the Skype Bible study group please email me. We hope to meet on Mon evenings at 7pm, however another time can be arranged, or another group formed if required.

GIVING

While financial giving is not the priority at this time a number of folk have asked about it. Each Friday from 10am-12noon a box will be available in my office where envelopes can be deposited. Also feel free to post a cheque to the church, envelope addressed to me, if that is easier. If you would like to take this opportunity to think about changing to Standing Order or avail of bank transfer please contact Gordon Dunlop to chat about how that would work.

PHONE FRIENDS

While elders and committee members are keeping in touch with their districts, to help folk continue to feel connected to the life of the congregation we are looking for anyone who would be interested in helping phone around some of our more isolated members. If you would be willing to help please let me know.

THANK YOU

The Spiers Family would like to thank everyone for their love, support and prayers given to Anna on her trip to Fiji. Anna came home two weeks earlier due to the Coronavirus and we are all happy to have her safely home.

GET IN TOUCH

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can be of any help whatsoever, if you need messages or even if you would just like a chat.