

Bulletin 14

Every time I sit down to write a bulletin, the word's, **"...do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching"**¹ race through my mind. That's what our church life is about. The Christian pilgrimage is not a lone journey, nor even one we make with Christ alone, it is one we make together as his church. The body of Christ, here on earth. We travel together.

Everything we do during this time of trial under Covid19 is about sticking together and making the

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journey as one. Even though local and national community enjoy increasing freedoms, ours, understandably, have not yet come. We must be patient and realise that our 'going without' is for the good of the greater community in fighting to keep the reinfection rate ('R') down to a minimum as a city, a church and a nation.

Most church congregations I know which compare with Emmanuel's size have recognized that due to the restrictions on numbers imposed by social distancing and the limitations on worshipful activity, they will not be able to meet in their normal numbers on a Sunday until such time as a vaccine or cure is found or some other way of eliminating risk becomes possible. They are aiming to review their decisions in September.

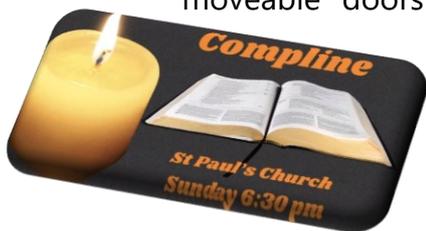
So, the future at Emmanuel would seem to lie in **keeping the Sunday 10.30am 'Go Live' Facebook as our main gathering**. Alongside this we will be able to offer meetings in smaller gatherings or for specific purposes – either on Sunday or midweek. The first experimental one of these is at 4.00pm this Sunday 19th, "The Gathering". It's an invitation to our children and their families to come to the church building and see the puppets live, to receive a Bible message, pray, chat (at a right social distance of course!) and enjoy seeing each other. It will be streamed live on Facebook. The next to follow will probably be a midweek communion in church – details to follow on that one.



Obviously daily prayers will continue at 9.00am too.

¹ Hebrews 10.25

At St Paul's it would be easier to bring the whole congregation together - we could open the moveable doors and spread into the whole building – but the profile of our congregation leads us to believe the majority might still feel unable to attend on the premises yet. So, for the time being, we're aiming for much the same as at Emmanuel. i.e. **we will keep Sunday Facebook 10.30 as the main gathering** but experiment with other additional gatherings. This week, at 6.30pm on 19th July, we are offering Compline, which is an order of service for a more meditative evening prayer. The intention is to make that a weekly event. It will be streamed live on Facebook.

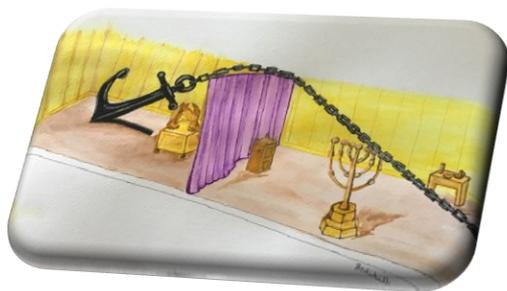


As the weeks of summer pass, we aim to establish a pattern of small gatherings at either end of the parish for those who are able and would like to meet. Anything we do will be streamed live and recorded for later viewing on the Emmanuel & St Paul's Facebook page, but in particular we intend, by the end of July, to ensure delivery of Word and sacrament on Sundays at at least one of the churches even if in simple or modest form. All that said, none of the new gatherings will conflict with the 10.30 Facebook Live gathering and we encourage you to keep that as the gathering that everyone attends, even if we attend others as well.

Partners in the kingdom and the patient endurance that is in Jesus

Finally, I think the present weeks we are passing through are some of our hardest. We've learned to deal with the restrictions placed upon us and the adversity we face, but our present times are times of just waiting with little positive change to encourage us. In the book of Revelation, the Christian audience who received its message were undergoing intense persecution, torture and even execution. Though our circumstances make no comparison to theirs, we do have one thing in common. They had no idea how long they would have to undergo their adversity. John writes to his brothers and sisters in Christ, ***"I, John, your brother and partner in tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus...."*** We too are in the partnership of faith, know tribulation, are partners in the kingdom and we too are blessed with a ***patient endurance in Christ***. It's a gift we often forget. As the great hymn, 'Jesus is King' reminds us,

*'We have a hope that is steadfast and certain,
Gone, through the curtain and touching the throne,
We have a Priest who is there interceding,
Pouring His grace on our lives day by day.'*



The faithless have no such hope, no such certainly. You and I do! We're good at this, it's what we do well as church – we know what it means to set our eyes on a further horizon in order to endure present times with patience and peace. I recently asked Ben Bloss and Debbie Turnbull to depict Hebrews 6:19 in art-form.

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain."

I love these pictures! Especially the solidity of the anchors and the outrageous thought that anything could possibly penetrate the Holy of Holies in such a manner! Yet that's what Christ's work did – it went where non-other could go to do what non-other could achieve – and so satisfy the wrath and judgement of the Lord God who was freed to share, unreservedly, his love with us once more. Our hope is indeed steadfast and certain!



*JESUS IS KING AND I WILL EXTOL HIM
Give Him the glory, and honour His name*

So even though there may be little change or progress we can see at this time, let's avail ourselves in prayer of that patient endurance which is ours in Christ Jesus – it's one of the greatest hidden treasures we have!

Every blessing in Christ,
Rev Karl