



Pastoral Letter #64
25th August 2021

Dear Church Family,

There's some wonderful words at the start of John's gospel, words we usually associate with Christmas and New Year: '*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth'* (v14).

September is a blink away. And it often feels more like a new beginning than January, where nothing much changes except the number of the year. In September the school and university year begins, work gathers pace, club and activities return, things get going. This year, that sense of a fresh start is perhaps intensified as we adjust to life after lockdown. September may not be the time to make resolutions, though it may still be a good moment for us to rethink the rhythm of our devotional lives. In doing so, there's one vital lesson to keep in mind – Jesus came for us.

We did not ascend to heaven; God descended to earth. As John puts it, '*the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us*' or from the Message translation, '*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.*' His was the initiative, ours only the response. It is ever so. We only seek God because God first sought us. Indeed, whenever we feel a stirring to pursue him, it's his grace that has put it there, his wooing that has roused us.

At the beginning of a new year, and perhaps in September too, many of us resolve to read our Bible more, to pray more, to be more fruitful in our everyday lives. We grit our teeth and 'try harder'. But we're already on the back foot.

If we forget that God has taken the decision to come to us, our prayers become an exercise in striving. We try to pray for longer than we desire, or pray the 'right' prayers. Soon we can feel dejected. Perhaps we have forgotten the grace of the incarnation, the coming of God to us. And so, the right response is not to strive but to rest, trusting that God wants to be with us, wants to listen, wants to speak.

So, instead of trying to manufacture an experience, it can be helpful simply to acknowledge his presence, repeating quietly to ourselves a short phrase like '*You are here. And I am here*' wherever you may find yourself this year.

In this position of prayerful trust, we can be confident that the places in which we find ourselves, the people among whom we live and work, and the tasks to which he calls us will all be permeated by the presence of the one who is '*full of grace and truth*'.

Just as Church begins to return to some degree of normality, you'll have no doubt seen the road-signs informing Cottenham residents that the High Street will be closed at Broad Lane for 3 weeks from the 1st of September. Whilst the replacement of the water pipes is long-overdue, I have to admit that my heart sinks at the prospect of many of you experiencing a much longer journey to get to Church on a Sunday. The way round the road closure is clearly Histon, A14, A10, Wilburton, and then into the village on the Twentypence Road, but there's also Long Drove with its single-

track road and passing places. For those of you able to cycle or walk, that's clearly the way to travel! Do please try and make the effort, remembering that many Christians face far greater obstacles to pursuing their faith than a temporary road closure.

On 13th September, we are planning to re-launch Little Saints. It is moving from a Thursday to a Monday as this is a better day for Marie and I who will be initially leading the group, and hopefully more convenient for volunteers. We do still need people who can commit to helping us set up, make tea and toast, and put toys away afterwards. This can be on a rota basis. Please get in touch ASAP if you can help in any way. Our church will not grow if we're not reaching out to young families in an intentional way.

As the Covid restrictions continue to loosen, both Marie and I are happy to meet folk for coffee and a chat. Just let us know. If you are unable to get to church and would like to receive communion at home, do also let us know. Maggie and Sue, our Authorised Lay Ministers, and Alison, our Lay Reader, would be glad to bring communion to people in their homes.

As we want there to be no obstacles to people coming to the Back to Church service, this has moved from Sunday 12th Sept to 31st October – All Saints Day. Given this is our Patronal Day, it rather fits to have this special service on this day. Invites to follow.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Best wishes,

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