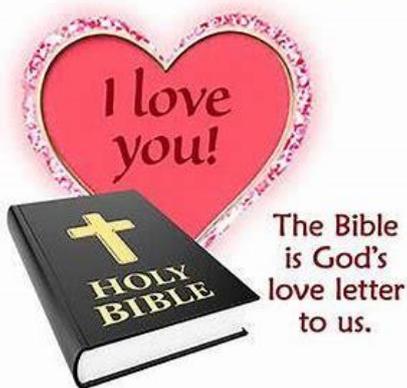


Dear Friends

Every morning, apart from Sunday, our alarm wakes us up with the sound of the Today program. Depending on the headlines, we are either lulled back into slumber or grumpily awakened. Sunday however is generally a much calmer mood, focussing on matters ethical and religious and followed by Sunday Worship.

We heard this week about the year long bible study introduced by the Catholic Church. "The Year of the Word" seeks to encourage members to share and live out their faith through deeper spiritual engagement and so to encounter God in new and exciting ways. Of course, the pandemic has put paid to much of what the church had planned but the bible study will continue.

The events of the last few months have shaken many of us to our foundations and that has often included our spiritual lives too. Many of us have had to dig deep within our reserves of faith for the strength we have needed to cope with this unforeseen and unprecedented situation. For many of us the bible has been a great source of comfort and hope. Contained within its pages are examples of situations and emotions that many of us will recognise, fear, despair, anger, sorrow, pain, and suffering as well as courage, encouragement, joy, praise, worship and adoration, Christians of all denominations (and many people who would claim no faith) have turned to the bible and found, far from it being an ancient book, irrelevant to life today, that it is a rich resource that speaks into every human situation. God did not promise us a life free from difficulty but he did promise to love us unconditionally. The bible shows us that God's love never fails and that we can trust him in every season of our lives.



***"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me ... Psalm 23***

***For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.***  
**Romans 15:4**

We told you a few weeks ago that the PCC had begun to make plans to re-open from September 13<sup>th</sup>. The list of what is required is long but we have made a start and over the last few weeks PCC members have been into the building to prepare. It is not simply a case of all turning up and getting on with it however. Because of social distancing rules we have had to ensure that people were either alone or with members of their own household and also that when people have been in the building there is a 72-hour gap until the next people go in. Once the building is cleared and all is in place to comply with the rules, the church will be deep cleaned before the doors are open to all. The building will look very different when it re opens but the church is the people, not the building and although this preparation is taking some time our priority has to be the safety and security of everyone who will come into the building.

You may also notice over the coming weeks some activity around the memory garden. Just before lockdown, the PCC agreed that we should extend the memory garden as the current plot is full and no more ashes can be interred there. In preparation for this the large leylandii needed to be removed. Planning permission was required (nothing is ever straightforward!) and this was granted and just a few days before lockdown the work started to remove them. The architect also came to look at the site and begin to think about how this extension might take shape. (The PCC envisages a plot next to the existing one, similar in size and design) This new area will NOT be defined with leylandii which are proving rather difficult to remove! The architect and surveyors will be looking at the site in the coming weeks and once they have completed their work the PCC will look at the plans and start the lengthy process of obtaining all

the relevant permissions for the work to begin. It is worth noting that this will take quite some time and depending on restrictions due to COVID this may extend the process even further. We will keep you up to date when we have more information.

Schools out for summer, sang Alice Cooper in 1972 (can't believe it's that long ago) But some families in our parish, (and probably far more than we realise), will be struggling to make ends meet. The Grace Food Bank, which we have supported for many years now, is particularly stretched at this time of year, and Liz and I thought it would be good to have a special collection for it. Ann Powell is happy to receive cash or cheques (made out to 'Grace Food Bank') through her letterbox (120 Baslow Road), and so are we. Alternatively, you can give via PayPal by going to the Grace Food Bank website and clicking on 'Donations'. I took the following off that page to give you some idea of what even a small donation can buy.

What could we buy for just - £5

- 2 x Boxes of cereal
- 2 x Bags of white rice
- 3 x Packets instant mashed potato
- 3 x Jars of Jam
- 2 x UHT milk
- 2 x Tea bags

What could we buy for just - £2

- 3 x Packs of noodles
- 2 x Tins of rice pudding
- 2 x Tins of tomatoes
- 2 x tins of soup

We hope all our families have a lovely summer, with time to spend together away from work and home schooling, and all the pressures of the last few months, and I close with the prayer that Phil included in this Sunday's virtual service.

***Father God, we ask you to be with all our young people as they break up for the summer holidays. We pray that they would be refreshed and re-energised over the summer period. We pray especially for those that find being away from school difficult, those who have difficult home lives, and those who may be falling behind due to the current disruption. Send your Holy Spirit to comfort and guide them all we pray. Amen.***

Stay safe and take care.

With love from

Liz and Angela.