

# Halesworth and Bramfield URC



**Coronavirus Email only Edition 17**

**August 2021**

## What we believe

*We believe that in obedience to Christ's command, we must proclaim the Gospel to the world in the power and at the direction of the Holy Spirit.*

*We are called out of darkness to live as children of light, reflecting God's glory all around.*

*We recognise that as a Church, the bride of Christ, we are commanded to love and encourage one another and ensure that no root of bitterness divides us.*

*We acknowledge our absolute dependence on Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father made us, Jesus has redeemed us and the Spirit sustains and provides all we need on our pilgrimage.*

*We acknowledge our commitment to the Bible, as the authoritative word of God able to teach us, guide us and inspire us as we discover God's perfect will for our lives.*

This is the Seventeenth e-mail instead of our usual magazine (production and printing suspended for the immediate future) I'm trying to put together pages that give up to date Church news and uplifting contributions. So if you have any news or contributions please  
e-mail [smedleybigal@aol.co](mailto:smedleybigal@aol.co)

**COPY FOR SEPTEMBER MAGAZINE BY 22nd August**

**Our Vision:  
"To know Jesus Christ;  
to make Him known."**

Dear Friends,

Since 'Step 4' of lockdown easing, what it is possible to do with gathered worship is now much more flexible. But the reported number of Covid – 19 infections still suggests we need to be cautious. We also need to provide for – and be considerate towards - those who feel vulnerable. Here are some practical steps:

- **Congregational singing** in worship was stopped but is now possible. A great relief to many of us! You no longer have to pretend not to be singing along behind your mask, but can 'let rip'! But singing probably should be with a mask in place.
- **Masks are now 'optional'** but you can continue. As you know, the main advantage is to protect others not yourself, so please do wear it if you become aware that those around you seem uncomfortable if you don't. And should we become a crowded venue, putting them on is recommended. The Elders feel inclined to encourage ongoing mask wearing for the good of all.
- **Social distancing is no longer required.** We've brought back a few more chairs, but the rows are still spaced out. You don't have to be in the same household or 'bubble' to sit next to someone. Caution remains appropriate and we should avoid crowding one another.
- **Communion is back.** The restrictions didn't forbid Communion as such, and as you may know, we have recently started holding Communion in the building as well as on Zoom. Initially, we are using pre-packed sealed containers with wafer and a portion of juice. Communion is on Sunday 1 August – and thereafter (usually) on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month, as before.
- **Bibles & hymnbooks** had to be removed because of caution about anything that different people might touch. We have not yet brought them back, but may do so soon. If so, please be cautious – return them to the chair back or rack beneath after use and don't pass them around.
- **Zoom continues** at least for a while. The option to 'attend' worship via Zoom remains important to many of you. For the time being we expect (normally) to have Zoom worship continue on Sundays

11am & 6.30pm, Tuesday lunchtimes at 12.30 and for Friday prayers.  
We are also considering having a gathered element to Friday prayer meetings soon.

We all need to be sensitive to one another. If you feel uncomfortable about attendance, taking off your mask, sitting closer than feels safe to others etc. everyone should be understanding. As you know, the government approach in dropping restrictions is not saying precautions are never needed, but rather that we are being given the responsibility, both individually and as a community, to act responsibly and make our own judgements. So, it follows that we must respect the judgements of others.

I do hope you are all encouraged by the greater freedom we have to worship, not only whole-heartedly but *whole-voicedly* (if such a word existed) and with other restrictions reduced. Please use these freedoms with joy – and also with caution and consideration.

And the main thing remains that, when we gather (including those joining by Zoom) we gather to worship!

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” (Rev 7: 10,12)



Blessings

Jon



Dear friends

Please continue to pray for John Royce, who is having a tough time. Also Nyomen Chipperfield who has been diagnosed with Parkinsons. Pray for her husband, Denis, who has stopped work to help support her, and for their family

Thank God for the resumption of family/children's activities in the church building. We had 5 weeks of really great sessions before term finished. And now we have Holiday Club coming up (see p6). Pray for Jo in her leadership and also Jean, Sarah, Elizabeth and Stacey who are on the team making all this possible, along with others who are being called in as Holiday Club comes up and September's plans are developing.

We have had several people join us for their first time as we continue with the cautious return to gathered services. Please pray for them and the others who may join us.

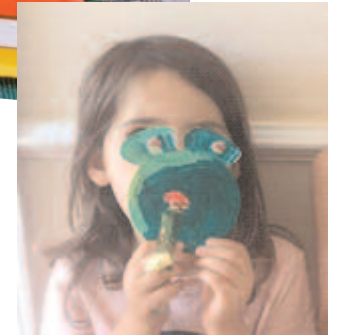
Please also pray for Jenny Riches, Andy Nichols, Sarah Baker, Chris Buttle, Chris Dominic, Paul & Kathryn Bones, Sheila Brown and others as you become aware of their needs.

Blessings

Jon

## Jo's News

It has been really great to meet many new Mums and start building up relationships with them and their children. There have been a few familiar faces, but with being closed for so long, the children who came previously have grown so much and many are now at nursery or school. This means that the children that are coming along have never been to any groups because of lockdown. Therefore, providing opportunities for these children to develop social skills is even more important than before, and the grown-ups are so pleased to be able to chat to others. As I said last month, the team helping has been amazing. We are now having the summer break and will start again in September. Please pray for wisdom as we make plans for September, hopefully bringing back some of the things that we did pre-covid and combining with some of the new things that we have done over the last few weeks.



Can you guess from these photos who we have been learning about in Messy Church? The frogs with a party blower tongues were probably most enjoyed craft ever! It has been different, difficult and good doing Messy Church on Zoom and YouTube! But we are really hopeful that we will be back in the Church in September, on Tuesdays after school. We will really be needing some helpers in the kitchen, and some people to chat with the families, so if you could turn up to help out, once a month, twice a month, or on an occasional basis please speak to Jo or Jon.

### **The Dustbin Crew Holiday Club (3rd-6th August)**



This year's theme might sound a bit rubbish! But we are going to be learning all about worship, which is very exciting. Please pray for all the arrangements and the families coming along. You will also have the opportunity to hear all about it at the service on Sunday 8th August, when we will be recapping the, who, why, how and what happens when, we worship.

Thank you for all of your support and prayers

Many Blessings

Jo Moreira (Children and family worker)

## Sunday Morning Refreshments

Who likes to have a mid-morning drink, maybe with a cheeky piece of cake or biscuit on the side? More importantly who has missed seeing and catching up with friends throughout the pandemic? It has certainly highlighted how important spending time, and building relationships with others is. Therefore, in September we would like (and are hoping) to offer the opportunity to do all of these things between 10:30am and 11am every Sunday morning in the back hall.



At 11am the usual service will start in the Church, and Jo will be reintroducing HURC Too, an intergenerational worship option, for the children and some of their families upstairs.

All we need now are people to prepare these refreshments each week. So, if you would like to be on a rota to help, either frequently or infrequently, please speak to Jo or Jon. If you could, and would like to take this exciting opportunity to serve others by being the person to make the rota we would also really love to hear from you.

*All these plans are provisional, subject to change if the Covid-19 situation makes it appropriate.*

Looking forward to spending time together soon.

Jo Moreira



## SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS IN AUGUST

**NO SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS  
THIS MONTH**

But should you have a birthday in August



## Suffolk Churches Ride & Stride



The event is happening again this year:  
Saturday 11 September 9am – 5pm.  
We hope to have both Halesworth & Bramfield buildings open for this. More details and sponsor forms from Kathryn Bones or Pat Potts.

### **Kitchen Update**

**The total as of 6th July is £3750.00**

**If you wish to contribute to this much needed update  
You can put your donation (marked kitchen) in the collection  
plate or by bank transfer (email David detailing your donation)  
or put in an envelope and take it to David.**

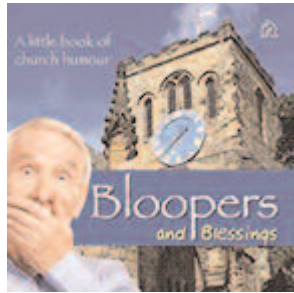


Gathered worship *continues* (Sundays 11am). Here is what is coming:

Sunday 1st	11.00 am Gathered Worship <b>and Zoom</b> (RevJon Sermon) 6.30pm Evening Worship ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Tuesday 3rd	12.30 pm Lunchtime Service ( <b>Zoom only</b> ) <b>6.30pm Elders' Meeting (Zoom only)</b>
Tuesday 3rd -Friday 6th	Holiday Cub every morning
Friday 6th	9.45 am Prayer Meeting ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Sunday 8th	11.00 am Gathered Worship <b>with Holiday Club theme</b> (Jo Moirera) 6.30pm Evening Worship ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Tuesday 10th 12.30 pm	Lunchtime Service ( <b>at Lowestoft and Zoom</b> )
7.30pm @ St Mary's:	Service of Installation & Licensing of Rev Dominic Doble as Team Rector for the Blyth Valley Anglican churches
Friday 13th	9.45 am Prayer Meeting ( <b>Zoom only</b> )

Sunday 15th	11.00 am Gathered Worship <b>and Zoom</b> (Rev Jon Sermon) 6.30pm Evening Worship ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 pm Lunchtime Service ( <b>at Lowestoft and Zoom</b> )
Wednesday 18th	7.00pm <b>Virtual Upper Room</b> on line event (book via the Dunamis website. See p14)
Friday 20th	9.45 am Prayer Meeting ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Sunday 22nd	11.00 am Gathered Worship <b>and Zoom</b> (tba) 6.30pm Evening Worship ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Tuesday 24th 12.30 pm	Lunchtime Service ( <b>at Lowestoft and Zoom</b> )
Friday 27th	9.45 am Prayer Meeting ( <b>Zoom only</b> )
Sunday 29th	11.00 am Gathered Worship <b>and Zoom</b> Dorothy Courtis 6.30pm Evening Worship ( <b>Zoom only</b> )

## Summer reading from Sign of the Fish



First a little levity (with apologies to our excellent editors and contributors)!

From *Bloopers and blessings*, on church notice sheets:

“Don’t be surprised to find mistakes on your church notice sheet. We print something for everyone and some people love finding mistakes”

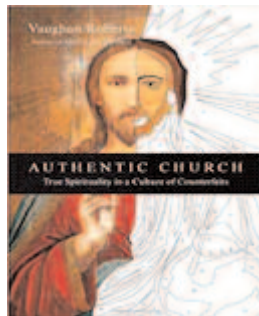
Not in Halesworth, of course!

Spelling errors and typos, malapropisms, innocent remarks from children... all very human, all raising a smile or a chuckle. You’ll find this with other gift books, ideal to cheer a dear friend with a birthday card, or to treat yourself on a rainy day.

As promised last month, here is August’s “Bag a Bargain” in Sign of the Fish

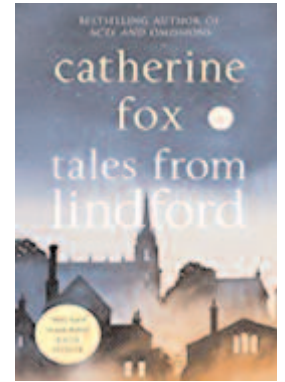
*Authentic Church: true spirituality in a culture of counterfeits*, by Vaughan Roberts.

Christians are captivated by consumerism, seduced by fame, distracted by technology and overwhelmed by media, writes the author. Meanwhile many of us have become motivated to “do church” differently by our experience of worship during Covid-19, but Church is more than varieties of Sunday worship. Perhaps our approach should be going back to basics, finding direction in St Paul’s prophetic letter 1 Corinthians; certainly the Corinthians were just as distracted by worldly, compromised lifestyles as we are, having a tendency to showy spiritual one-up-man-ship rather than displaying loving concern. A punchy read, and also a useful tool for anyone contemplating leading a home group study of 1 Corinthians.



I have recently read and enjoyed two new novels from Christian publishers, neither pious nor overtly serious, both ideal holiday reading.

*Tales from Lindford*, by Catherine Fox A must for all of us who enjoyed the \*Lindford trilogy and I can’t do better than quote from the official blurb. January 2020. Freddie, Father Dominic, Jane and all the other residents of Lindfordshire are celebrating the New Year with parties and resolutions. None of them is aware of the trials and tribulations the coming months will bring – not least the horseman of the apocalypse who has set out quietly, with barely a jingle of harness, in a distance province of China . . .

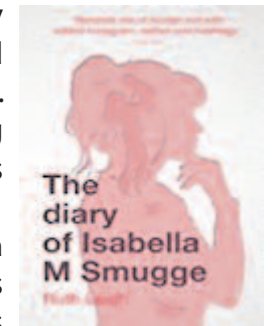


The author wrote this in real time in the midst of the pandemic, this entertaining book captures the difficulties of 2020 with heart, humour and insight. Perfect for Lindchester fans, it’s also the ideal novel for anyone seeking comfort and a way of understanding all that has been happening. Though there are tears as well as laughter the narrative affirms that even in darkness grace is to be found.

\**Acts and omissions, Unseen things above, Realms of glory*

*The diary of Isabella M Smugge*, by Ruth Leigh

It would be easy to dismiss this as Christian chick-lit by the cover, but as another reviewer remarked “(it)reminds me of Austen but with added Instagram...” I thought Izzy was most like a modern *Emma*, making a very good living as an Instagram influencer but is endearingly self-unaware. She moves her family to ... Suffolk!...for a better life style and to gain herself a whole new set of followers, only things don’t go as envisaged, and her “perfect life” begins to unravel as she tries to integrate into her new environment (to the embarrassment of her son). But on the way she is rescued by the young vicar’s wife and begins to think there is something in this God thing. The author has realistically captured the mutual suspicion between the rural poor and the well-to-do



incomers, and ends the book at a moment of crisis, so I am very glad to learn a sequel is on the way...

These two books are to be found in the Halesworth Bookshop, indeed the last time I popped in there was a tidy pile of *The diary of Isabella M Smugge* ready and waiting

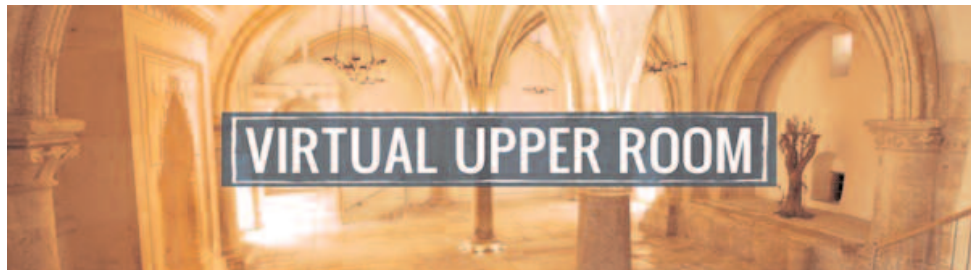
STOP PRESS

The classic CS Lewis titles are back in stock

*Val Jennings*

For Sign of the Fish

Everything has gone "Virtual"! (well, a lot of things...). And it includes that the 'Upper Room' experience of the first followers of Jesus, waiting for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3: 15-16, John 14: 15-27, Acts 1: 5,8, Acts 2).



The startling reality: Jesus **wants** to equip His church for mission, by the Power of the Holy Spirit! (As we have been seeing during Lent Bible Studies).

The Dunamis Fellowship Britain & Ireland are offering sessions on Zoom to prepare the ground and pray with people to receive. One such comes up on Wednesday 18 August, at 7.00pm. You can go to the website: [www.dunamis.org.uk](http://www.dunamis.org.uk) to book a place! I will be there.

Jon

## The Pandemic has given us time to think.

By - Martin Dominic

During a period of personal reflection, I read the book of Joel. The prophet was lamenting the damage inflicted by a plague of locusts and severe drought, and the passage in chapter 2 verses 1 -3 stood out. Whilst the theme of the book is much broader than just the issues related to the natural world, one quality of biblical texts is to open the mind to related matters that are of interest or troubling us. I envisioned humanity as that plague, ravaging the world with our destructive plundering of resources for short term economic gain, and the consequences of our behaviour.

In 1950 the world population was approximately 2.5 billion, now, July 2021, the world's human population is 7.9 billion. As the population has been growing, the material standard of living has been improving also. This situation has been sustained by a parallel growth in the consumption of raw materials, energy, natural resources and the destruction of many millions of hectares of wild places, the habitat for myriads of species. The wealthy have prospered, often to the detriment of indigenous peoples and the poor of less developed nations.

Since the end of World War two the practitioners of mainstream economics have persuaded the governments of the most powerful nations that Gross Domestic Product (GDP, the sum total of a nation's economic activity, (productive or destructive), is the true measure of success. The adherence to this mantra demands perpetual economic growth: Margaret Thatcher is accredited with the statement "there is no alternative", which has become known by its acronym TINA.

The pandemic has imposed a temporary brake on economic activity, giving us time to reflect about many aspects of our lifestyle. It has also come at a time of the rapidly increasing numbers of forest fires and extreme weather conditions, that are symptoms of the deterioration in planetary ecosystems and witness the ever-increasing impact of climate change. Covid 19 has dominated our governments attention for 18 months, and it is right that it should be their priority. The government has made much of its adherence to scientific opinion in policy making regarding the management of the pandemic situation.

The same government has made extravagant promises about the GHG emission reduction targets we are to aim for, to prevent runaway climate change. This government came to power brimming with



confidence, that the freedom from constraints from E.U. Membership would enable us to accelerate our economic growth. Now that it is believed, by many in government, that we have arrived at a time when we have control of the pandemic situation, there are indications that business as usual is back on the agenda. Many people, who are well informed about the science of climate change, are now worried about the viability of the government's emission reduction targets, in the light of our lack of any published plans or significant preparation.

The most important international conference for the future of the creatures that live on planet Earth, to be held in many decades, is due to begin in November 2021, in Glasgow under the chairmanship of the UK government. The core issues under discussion have already been agreed and ratified under the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. This conference is to nail down the carbon emission control commitments of each nation for succeeding years, to ensure that collectively the global community reduces GHG emissions to nett zero by 2050. To achieve these economic policies matter. If we have no plans and have prepared poorly our commitment amounts to so much hot air.

For centuries the Credo of free-market practitioners has been "Survival of the fittest", winner takes all. The gathering environmental disaster is its consequence. The primordial instinct which drives "survival of the fittest" needs to be replaced by a more nuanced attitude for those who aspire to be stewards of creation. What is concluded at the COP26 conference must be based on love for our neighbour, whoever they, or it, may be. The Prophet Joel not only lamented the destruction wrought by locusts, he also spoke of the Day of the Lord and foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit. I hope our church will, during the build-up to the November conference, embrace Christian initiatives to inform people about the issues. As a nation we initiated the industrial revolution and used our technological might to build the world's largest colonial empire. We are now holding the chair at the COP26 conference and have a moral responsibility to seek a just agreement that acknowledges our contribution to the climate crisis, and to make a commensurate contribution to its resolution.

## Levi *Mark 2: 14ff*

From my earliest memories, I can't ever remember feeling welcome. My father called me a "wild donkey" of a child. He always seemed to be angry with me. My mother just cried a lot. Everyone else I knew seemed to do all the right things...they didn't make waves, they kept "in line": but try as I might, I just couldn't get anything right. It was even worse when I thought of the name I had been given...Levi comes from the priestly clan (goody goodies!) and it means "accepted / joined", Hah! Nothing could have been further from the truth. I was never accepted and was joined to nothing: nothing and no-one at all...even my name mocked me.

Perhaps because I was so alone, I learned to use my wits and, as I reached adulthood, I found myself in the company of others who were as unpopular as I was: a bit of a mixed blessing! Weirdly, the invading Romans turned out to be an actual life line for me! They "taxed" us, of course! ..(after all, they were the victors, we were the vanquished) so it seemed a good move to me to become one of their "tax collectors." I certainly couldn't be any less popular than I already was! and this was an opportunity to become wealthy...it gave me some power and I was able to "cock a snook" at everyone. I also had a number of associates in my sphere that would help me, both to collect money when people were 'unwilling' to comply as well as guard my back! You know, the Romans are a funny lot... they don't have a care about what level of commission we collectors demand from the 'customers'; just as long as **they** receive the amount of money they want. So, I became wealthy, with the result that although I was hated, lots of people started to defer to me. Of course, I knew that they did not really respect me, but with money who needs respect? I was doing well.

Well...it was a day like any other. I was sitting at my booth, surrounded by my support associates, collecting the money that the populace, grudgingly brought to me. All of a sudden, there was a bit of a bustle and a crowd of people walked in to the market place, talking animatedly and focussing on someone who was right at the centre of this little crowd. As they drew closer, I caught sight of him. There was nothing special about him, just an ordinary, run of the mill bloke, but they were all skipping around him like

a load of puppy dogs. I caught his eye and was literally held in the gaze of someone who could obviously see right through me: but here is the strange thing, I didn't feel small, or "rubbish", as I had become accustomed to feeling when under scrutiny (so to speak). Then I heard someone shout "Jesus!" and the man released me from his gaze, as he turned towards the person who had called him. Ah, so this was the one, the "new kid on the block" who was annoying the priests, the Pharisees and the Sadducees... quite a neat trick really! I'd never known the Pharisees and Sadducees to agree about anything, but they all agreed on how they felt about him! I almost felt some sympathy for him. But then, he was also popular with all the "little" people, all those that were fawning around him right now. They spoke about him as though he was a prophet and a worker of miracles. I doubted that he and I would ever have anything in common. I returned to my work, but soon I became aware that everything around me had become still and quiet. I looked up. All the excitable crowd who had swept past me were now crowding around my booth, staring at me. I soon realised why, this Jesus fella was also standing there, grinning at me.

"Hello Levi!" he said, perfectly amiably and just as though he had known me all his life, "How are you today?" I was taken aback: people don't ever choose to stop and enquire about my well-being. I fixed him with a hard stare, hoping to throw him off balance and to make it clear that it was not a good idea to mess with me! But he was totally unaffected. Again, he met my gaze unambiguously. There was not a sign of anything in his manner towards me that was critical or judgemental. He was genuinely waiting for my answer! I was unsettled, feeling totally on unfamiliar ground. Here I was, surrounded by the local populace, all of whom hated me with every fibre of their being and all straining to hear what I would say to this man. I didn't want to lose face, look weak, or foolish. I struggled to find a response that would not ruin my "street cred" but faced with the onslaught of his transparently honest enquiry, I could do nothing more than mutter, "I'm well thank you". I was feeling foolish, but Jesus responded immediately with his pleasure at this reply. He continued, "Levi, I think that you are ready for a change of career, come now and follow me." To my absolute astonishment, I stood up and walked away from my tax booth and literally joined the crowd walking with him. Later that afternoon I invited Jesus and his friends to share a meal with me that evening.. Jesus

accepted with obvious delight and there was an audible gasp from all around.

My house was full to bursting that night! All my many associates and contacts were there, other tax collectors, some wealthy men with dubious "connections", and many notorious young women...but not only these "usual suspects." There were also some Pharisees, Sadducees and members of the Herodian party, superciliously lurking outside the door, where they could observe and contemptuously intimidate every person who entered. Their disapproval of the invited guests was palpable and it gave me unfettered glee to see the "snobs" on the outside for a change. Jesus and his close friends arrived. True, some of them were a bit 'stiff' to start off with, but Jesus was simply smiley and chatting away to everyone. All of us were astounded. None of my friends were used to being respected to any degree but this is exactly what was happening with this Jesus. There was no sign of condemnation against any of us, just a genuine interest in who we were. It didn't take long for the 'holy' people to start disdainfully asking Jesus' disciples (rather loudly) how Jesus could bear to eat with "tax collectors and sinners."

I was expecting some reaction from Jesus but not what I saw. He spoke to the whole group of Pharisees and Sadducees as though they were untutored children. He said that "only the sick needed a doctor" and when they asked more questions (obviously trying to "throw" Jesus) he spoke with real authority about what their attitudes, to other people, should be! They couldn't find anything else to say. He was a better teacher than any rabbi I have ever encountered...some of the critics went quiet and you could actually see them thinking hard, others reacted in dismissal, but it was clear that they were completely outwitted. Me?? Well, as I watched and listened, I was convinced the I wanted to spend time with this Jesus. I really **wanted** him to be my teacher, more than I have ever wanted anything...that's really something.... when you realize that I have never before respected any of the 'God botherers'. Despite the financially comfortable lifestyle I had, and the sneering power I could exert over those who made me feel small, I wanted to learn from, work with and follow this Jesus to wherever he would lead me. I left my house, my wealth and my friends in order to be a disciple and I've followed him ever since. I never

feel judged, or found wanting; I no longer crave approbation from anyone and I no longer put any faith in worldly wealth. The friendship of Jesus more than covers all those areas of my life where I was seeking to be accepted, because Jesus is my friend and I need nothing else.....

Lorraine



## JESUS IN THE BLACKNESS

We are called to trust our God despite circumstances,  
Jesus is not affected by the blackness we experience -  
He is there, the same as always.

His power is the same,  
His love is the same,  
His forgiveness is the same,  
His confidence and calm reassurance  
Are the same.  
He still believes in me,  
He is not dismayed -  
Neither should I be.

“Trust me, even in the blackness” says Jesus,  
As his light, power and love flow constantly and reliably  
Making the blackness (even though it is still there)  
Not quite so daunting.

The fear is gone,  
The feeling of being overwhelmed by it  
Is gone...  
And Jesus presence is discerned.

Ruth Sermon Sept 2000

## OVERCOMING FEAR

What's the opposite of fear?  
Courage?

Sometimes.  
But maybe,  
in life's uncertainties and challenges,  
the opposite of fear is trust.

First, we learn to trust God –  
to have confidence in Him.  
Then, as we trust God more,  
we find we also trust ourselves more.

That may seem strange,  
but we're not becoming self-reliant.  
No, we're finding that as we see God at work  
(Yes, even through *us!*)  
So, we begin to trust that when challenges come –  
and even when they seem to pounce on us –  
we can tap into the wisdom, love and power  
of the Holy Spirit –  
who lives within us!

In fact, trust and confidence in God  
aren't simply the opposite of fear ...  
they're the antidote.

Ruth Sermon July 2011 (altered May 2015 and July 2020)

