



St Matthew's (Lock down) Newsletter – May 2020

⁴⁸ For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—
but Satan blocked our way.

1 Thessalonians 2

Two things stand out from what St Paul writes. Firstly – and this struck me forcefully as I was reading Paul's letter – Paul had little direct contact with the churches he founded. Much of the time he was not able to be with the Christians in the churches he had founded; he had a good number to get round, and travel was not easy, plus he found himself confined to a prison cell towards the end! He pastored by letter, often. This strikes me as what I am having to do today and whilst I do not like it, I am comforted that it is not a 'new' situation, in fact a very old one.

The second thing that stands out is Paul's reference to Satan. I believe Satan has indeed 'inspired' the Corona pandemic. Certainly Corona is blocking our way in many and various ways. Again, I find this comforting, for God is stronger than Satan and so Corona *will* be defeated in time. I am also comforted because God is more than able to turn the pandemics of Satan to His own advantage (see the cartoon overleaf for instance). The church (that's you and me) *will* emerge refined from this difficult season. Satan's plan will backfire, and spectacularly so. Two reasons, then, to take heart.

Dates for your Diary

September 19/20
**Patronal Weekend –
with a service,
hopefully, and even a
picnic, perhaps**

St Matthew's News

- **Our Finances** – like most, we have been hit, financially, by Corona. Many thanks indeed to those who have taken to giving via Standing Order, have increased their Standing Order or have put cheques in the post. Special thanks to one donor (a past member) who made a £2,000 donation! And, of course, to Mary Yale, our extraordinarily faithful and able treasurer.
- **St Matthew's Patronal Weekend** – Whilst we make no plans – we dare not – it may well be that our Patronal weekend, 19-20 September will be an appropriate moment to celebrate. Who knows? But for now, please note the date in your diary. If we can gather, we will – outside if necessary! – and hopefully share some food together, even a late summer picnic!
- **APCM** – we had planned to hold our annual meeting on Sunday 17 May. We hope, now, to do so at some point in the autumn.

Will Writes,

I am pleased to report that everyone at St Matthew's is well. To qualify, 'well', the older members are a bit cooped up and bored, those with families a bit frazzled (teaching fractions and the like!), those who are single a bit lonely. But, overall, everyone is well. This is remarkable. We are a diverse bunch and not without our frailties, especially physically, and so to be able to report this news does, I hope you agree, speak of the faithfulness of God. He watches over his Church, he really does.

Corona has reminded us all that wherever you are on the extrovert – introvert spectrum we are **social beings**. We were made to relate to one another and so as Corona has confined us to our homes, we have struggled to meet this basic need that is 'hard wired' into us.

Corona has also reminded us, and forcefully so, that we are **spiritual beings**. People without a rooted spiritual life – alas many today in our country – have found the conditions of Corona far harder. Corona has taken so much away, but not our spiritual life. In fact, to speak of our spiritual nature is simply to take the need for human to human interaction and transfer it to our need for human to divine interaction. Our faith is primarily relational – we are God’s children – and so to relate spiritually to the Lord is the very essence of what Christians are. As churches have closed their doors and people confined to their homes, so we have had to adjust to how we ‘find the Lord’. Real faith will always find a way. St Paul, as I mentioned in the piece above, found himself in a prison cell. Hardly a church! But his very real faith found a way. In fact if you read his letter to the Philippians, he is full of joy in that prison cell; it became his church, for church is where God is – our hearts Paul also says, are to be temples of the Holy Spirit.

Like you I am sure, I have found the changes **exhausting**. So much to adjust and realign. And everything has changed so fast! It wasn’t long ago that we could meet together. But I am convinced that we will emerge as a stronger church. We will appreciate meeting that bit more (and for many a lot more!) and we will bring to our meetings a greater inner core of faith, refined in these times of lock down. And, I hope also, that many on the fringes will become core members and many right on the margins might start coming from time to time. Who knows? But I suspect God is working his good purposes out in all this. He has His ways!

I have always liked this line from the Psalms -

‘Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!’

Psalms 27:14

With Love, Will, Liz, Thomas & Olivia

The Plan will backfire.....

