



ST JAMES

CARLISLE

Vicar's Letter January 2022

Dear Friends,

NINA WRITES...

'I am the Alpha and the Omega' says the Lord God 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty' these words from Revelation are a great anchor for us as we enter 2022. A time of uncertainty continues on many levels; covid variants, political integrity, climate change, spells of destructive weather, increase in mental health issues... the list goes on. But the love of God, the presence of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit are constant, unchanged and available for us as we follow Jesus into this new year. He knows both the joys and the challenges we face and is walking through it with us.

Sometimes January can feel a bit of a con to me as a new year, and more like a continuation of a long winter, endurance through the darkness, for the nights are long and mornings dark in Carlisle! Especially after all the Christmas lights come down from the shop windows and people's houses. Our house always feels so bare after the decorations get packed away. As I was reflecting on this I was suddenly encouraged once again about the knowledge that it was precisely into our darkness that Jesus the *'true light that gives light to every man'* arrived, his birth changed the course of history, so from then on we have a new start, and each year is a new opportunity, a new adventure with him. The passage in Revelation continues *'I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus...'* This aptly summarises the experience of Christian life; in the world that so often does not recognise Jesus and God's ways, we will face hardships, even persecutions of many kind, and therefore don't need to be surprised when it happens. But we belong to a different kingdom, God's kingdom of justice, mercy and love and have the privilege to experience this together, and share it with others as we commit ourselves to Jesus. And in this time of waiting for God's kingdom to break through in full, we are called to patiently endure in sure hope of God's promises to be fulfilled.

How might we do that in this coming year?

It is good from time to time review our devotional habits and the new year provides an ideal time to do that, not so that we set ourselves resolutions only to be demoralised when we can't keep them up, guilt is not a productive company, but as an opportunity to perhaps try something different if we've been following the same

pattern for many years. There are so many good resources its impossible to list all of them here, but reading and devotional plans such as Bible in One Year (BIOY) by Nicky Gumbel, Pray As You Go, and Lectio365 by 24/7 Prayer are solid resources to keep up a daily habit of being fed by God's word and praying into what we read. Lectio 365 now also has a family version to try out as a whole family! BIOY is offered as classic, express or youth version, so you can either follow the whole text or a speedy version. In addition the Christian Healing Mission has a daily blog encouraging and guiding us to find the presence of Jesus in our everyday life. They have also published 'Every Day Matters - daily reflections on living as a child of God' with 365 readings (go to www.healingmission.org).

WHY DO YOU NEED A CHURCH FAMILY?

Why Do You Need a Church Family? This is what Pastor Rick Warren recently wrote in answer to this question:

1. **A Church Helps Me CENTRE My Life Around God**

“Christ’s love has the first and last word in everything we do. Our firm decision is to work from this focused centre.” 2 Corinthians 5:14 (The Message)

2. **A Church Helps Me CONNECT With Other Believers**

“Christ makes us one body and individuals who are connected to each other.” Romans 12:5 (GW)

3. **A Church Helps Me CULTIVATE Spiritual Maturity**

“He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.” Ephesians 4:16 (NLT)

4. **A Church Helps Me CONTRIBUTE Something Back**

“God has made us what we are and given us new lives from Christ Jesus; and long ages ago he planned that we should spend these lives in helping others.” Ephesians 2:10 (TLB)

5. **A Church Helps Me COMMUNICATE God’s Message**

“Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself, and God gave us the work of telling everyone about the peace we can have with him . . . And he gave us this message of peace. So we have been sent to speak for Christ.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (NCV)

At the start of a new year, it would be good for us all to heed the words of Hebrews 10:25, *‘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.’*

ADVERTISING FOR A NEW YOUTH WORKER

With Ruth leaving us in May, we have started the process of advertising for a new Youth Worker, to hopefully join us in April. Please pray that a suitable candidate will be found for this really important role. It is a part time role

(20-25 hours a week), although we will consider applications from those offering less than 20 hours a week). Details of the post can be found via our website and Facebook page, please pass on details of this post to anyone who you may think would be interested in it. The closing date for applications is Monday 31st January.

THE SANCTUARY COURSE

The past year has not been easy and we may find ourselves feeling weary and tired. So as we offer this new year to the Lord, and ourselves to him, let's also be kind to ourselves and to each other. May this be a year when we grow in caring deeper for each other as Jesus is caring for us.

One of the ways we can do this is exploring together mental health issues and faith. We are aware of the increasing number of people suffering from different mental health challenges, often this is hidden as it is not as obvious as a broken leg for example, and there continues to be stigma and uncomfortableness around talking about and living with mental health challenges. We would love as a church to be a place of welcome and safety for all, and as one practical offering we are running an eight week Sanctuary Course starting Monday 10th January at 7.30pm on Zoom, which addresses questions around mental health and faith. I would love to encourage you to join so that together we are in a better place to understand and support each other.

Each session includes a short video, discussion times in small groups, reflection and prayer time. It covers topics such as understanding mental health and illness, challenging stigma, the recovery journey, companionship, self-care, and the role of community in mental health recovery and support.

For more information about the course please visit: www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org/sanctuary-course/

Please email Nina at nina@stjamescarlisle.org.uk to join, and also if you have any further questions about the course.

THE BEREAVEMENT JOURNEY

Also starting on the evening of Monday 10th January on Zoom is The Bereavement Journey, a 6-week course, facilitated by Churches in Carlisle area and based on Cruse Bereavement Care.

Working through grief and loss of a loved one takes a long time. This course is for anyone who is bereaved, whether recently or dating back several years. Topics covered include:

- Attachment, separation and loss
- The impact and pain of bereavement
- Adjusting to change
- Anger and guilt

- Coping with others' reactions
- Moving forward healthily

The first five sessions are suitable for people of all faiths or none, and there is an optional sixth session which explores a Christian response to bereavement.

Each week involves two short talks, followed by an opportunity for discussion in small groups. For more information about this course, and to request a booking form, please email Deacon Mark Attwood:

mark@thecairn.me.uk. We hope to run The Bereavement Journey in person at St James later in the year.

JUST ASKING

Just Asking is a new initiative for 2022, meeting in Cornerstone on Wednesday mornings at 9.30am, 'Just Asking' is a safe space to ask any questions you may have about faith and belief. Come and grab a drink, and join us at Cornerstone from Wednesday 12th January.

SERVICES DURING JANUARY

With uncertainty surrounding Covid, please visit our website & Facebook page for up to date information about service times. No decision has yet been made as to when to resume weekly evening services.

Sunday 2nd January

10.30am Altogether Worship

Sunday 9th January

10.30am Joint Communion Service

6.30pm Evening Encounter Worship

Sunday 16th January

10.00am Contemporary Worship

11.30am Morning Worship

Sunday 23rd January

10.00am Contemporary Worship

11.30am Morning Worship

Sunday 30th January

10.00am Contemporary Worship

11.30am Morning Worship

God bless



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