

Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne



February 2021

Churches have not always been the most forward-looking places. And I think you can see why, with a mentality that can sometimes come over as derived from that Bible verse,

*I am coming soon.
Hold fast what you have, so that no
one may seize your crown.*
(Revelation 3:11)

There is too easily the temptation to think that church life - particularly in a country in which the Gospel is no longer thriving as it used to - is mainly about battening down the hatches, keeping the doors open, nobly maintaining the faithful "old paths".

To which, of course, the answer is both Yes and No. The truths

of the Gospel are timeless, and there really is ...

*the faith that was once for all
delivered to the saints.*
(Jude 1:3)

But that has never meant that real godliness only lies in spurning anything new and modern. There is no particular value in making a principle of wearing old-fashioned clothes, or speaking in archaic language, or insisting that church furniture should be uncomfortable to sit upon ... even if all of these were good enough for our honoured predecessors (and, some would argue, for the Apostle Paul).

But when churches come out from the strange kind of enforced hibernation of 2020-2021, I wonder if there won't be a hint of the shock that would have hit the eight people emerging from Noah's Ark, and finding the world changed around them.

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It manifestly is the case that “things will never be the same again”.

For one thing, there will be the memories, not least the memories of those who have departed this world during the varying degrees of Lockdown. You may not have been able to visit them in hospital as you feel you should have. You may not have been able to attend their funerals as you would have wished to. You may not have been permitted to give the grieving family members the hug that you think they so desperately needed.

For most of us, the memories of “Zoom Church” - perhaps including rather shyly singing along to the songs emanating from the laptop - will not soon be forgotten.

But within even a few months of the start of Lockdown, most churches found themselves forced to make technological jumps that would typically have only come in incrementally - and perhaps with highly acrimonious discussions at church members’ meetings - over perhaps a decade.

What was once all but sci-fi has become routine in our own homes. Back in my lab days, ever at the cutting edge of modern technology, we were once awed with the possibilities associated with the “video-conference suite”. It was something to boast of to any interview candidates we had to show around. Wow, look, you can talk to *and see* people *in the USA* in real time!

And now any kid with a sec-

ond-hand smartphone in their hand can do the same!



The kids grow up with it, and just think it's normal. We might well have thought that we would (maybe) get around to checking out this new tech stuff for church stuff (eventually) ... but (with some relief) I can't see it catching on.

And yet we have been forced to become quite adept in Zooming or Streaming, and I can't see us now wanting to go back entirely to those former ways of doing things.

So a few weeks back, there was a prayer meeting for the *Caring for Life* work. If it had been held in an actual building (remember those?), it would have involved at least an hour's travelling for some of the participants, on top of the time spent praying. But who might *not* have come, if that was factored in?

At the beginning of last year, I had my first Zoom meeting, the Peninsula Gospel Partnership steering group, which normally met in somewhere central for the Devon and Cornwall churches: *Lifton*, an hour up the A30. Travel doubles or even trebles the time the meeting takes out of the diary.

Is there any way, do you

think, now we have discovered this remarkable way of sort-of-meeting, that we will ever fully go back to only-in-person? You might argue it's not the same, which is of course true. But neither is phoning someone the same as seeing them in person - it's just that we have got thoroughly used to phoning people as just part of normal interactions.

So, when it comes to it, when the Virus has done its horrendous worst, and the vaccine has done its wonderful stuff, our church life is not going to return to precisely what it was. Screen tech meetings will now be part of what we do, on some occasions, I'm sure.

Maybe so that those who just can't get to a meeting in person can still participate to *some* meaningful extent, seeing, hearing and contributing remotely.

Maybe some meetings will happen that just wouldn't happen, if people had to travel all that distance, or through that snow.

But I am reminded of those early days of Tuckermill - which I saw something of from my first days as a believer at Redruth Baptist - when what we were doing was really quite radical.

It was a church *plant*, and there was no "Before", insisting that everything remain the same. There was a clean sheet, and you could start thinking through things from scratch. What meetings, what days and times, what content and choreography of those meetings - subject

to Scripture, of course, but also most suitable to our work patterns or family circumstances?

We are not going to be able to go back to an entirely clean sheet



again, of course. We have found some patterns that work well for us - and perhaps even now conformed our diaries to those weekly, monthly or yearly patterns. But I think we need to see the coming Return to Normality as *not* simply a mandate to pick up precisely where we left off.

First of all, we *need* to integrate the new digital and screen possibilities into our thinking. What can we do better - or even, what could we now *start* doing, with 2020's tech?

I think I would now call that a *need-to*. But there are further *options* open to us, as well. Do we want to make the wonderful new music we have found during Lockdown more part of our in-person worship in future - and if so, how's best to go about that? Do our meeting times need to go back to what they were, pre-Lockdown, or have we been forced into changes which we now realise we would prefer to continue?

Whatever we decide on,

though, please let us not just decide by focusing on our own convenience. We've had to become far more flexible, this last year. Can we capture some of that attitude of flexibility *for the sake of the Gospel* - thinking about people who *don't* yet call this church home, who may-be haven't even yet received Jesus Christ as Lord?



miles? Now, while we've been graciously softened up a bit by the way we've been forced to adapt to a year of Lock-downs.

Folks, what of our worthy (but non mandatory) traditions are we prepared to do without ... in order that people may come to know Jesus Christ here, in the future, and so that they may grow in grace together with us?

Are there things (no, *people!*) that we should be making provision for *now*, before, as they say, choosing our rut for the next 300

Peter Ham

You can contact Peter Ham, TRBC's pastor,
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Zoom meetings - "online church":
maintaining the times we have become used to
over the previous months,
but possibly with *some* people able to meet at the chapel
Sundays: 10.30 and 6.30
Thursdays 7.00

	10.30 a.m.	6.30 p.m. (cafe church)
14 th February	Guest service: "I've got you" (+ TEC)	Video
21 st February	Nick Fuller (+ TEC)	Video
28 th February	Exodus 17	Following on from a.m.
7 th March	Exodus 18	Following on from a.m.

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Change of address

By the time this is officially published on Sunday,
Bob and Lillian will hopefully be in their new address:

39 Coronation Avenue, Camborne TR14 7PE
Landline: 01209 610326 Mobile: 07565 922910
lillianhillman@gmail.com

Learning from Lockdown

A Peninsula Gospel Partnership meeting
(aimed at church leadership teams but open to all)

Wednesday 10th February

10.00 What have we learnt? (Michael Ots, *Association of Evangelists*)

11.00 Examples of gospel innovation and creativity around the region

11.45 Why Mission now? (Le Fras Strydom, *The Word One to One*)

12.20 Creating a culture of gospel sharers (Le Fras Strydom)

Please contact Peter for the Zoom login details.

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The Cause of Your Fatigue

(by Max Lucado, circulated by a *Bible Gateway* mailing)

I know the cause of your fatigue. You need to trust God's grace.

Follow the example of the Chilean miners. Trapped beneath two thousand feet of solid rock, the thirty-three men were desperate. The collapse of a main tunnel had sealed their exit and thrust them into survival mode. They ate two spoonfuls of tuna, a sip of milk, and a morsel of peaches -- every other day. For two months they prayed for someone to save them.

On October 13, 2010, the men began to emerge, slapping high fives and leading victory chants. A great-grandfather. A forty-four-year-old who was planning a wedding. Then a nineteen-year-old. All had different stories, but all had made the same decision. They trusted someone else to save them. No one returned the rescue offer with a declaration of independence: "I can get out of here on my own. Just give me a new drill." They had stared at the stone tomb long enough to reach the unanimous opinion: "We need help. We need someone to penetrate this world and pull us out." And when the rescue capsule came, they climbed in.

Why is it so hard for us to do the same?

We find it easier to trust the miracle of resurrection than the miracle of grace. We so fear failure that we create the image of perfection, lest heaven be even more disappointed in us than we are. The result? The weariest people on earth.



Attempts at self-salvation guarantee nothing but exhaustion. We scamper and scurry, trying to please God, collecting merit badges and brownie points, and scowling at anyone who questions our accomplishments. Call us the church of hound-dog faces and slumped shoulders.

Stop it! Once and for all, enough of this frenzy. "Your hearts should be strengthened by God's grace, not by obeying rules" (Hebrews 13:9, NCV). Jesus does not say, "Come to me, all you who are perfect and sinless." Just the opposite. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NASB).

There is no fine print. A second shoe is not going to drop. God's promise has no hidden language. Let grace happen, for heaven's sake. No more performing for God, no more clamouring after God. Of all the things you must earn in life, God's unending affection is not one of them. You have it. Stretch yourself out in the hammock of grace.

You can rest now.

Loving your annoying family

(by Ruth Baker, on the *GoThereFor* blog)

“How do you deal with an annoying person?” sighed my Christian friend as she collapsed onto my couch. “I wish someone would write a course on how to deal with annoying people.”

Sometimes it feels like it would be easier to be non-Christians with the freedom to just ignore annoying people. As Christians, however, this ‘freedom’ to cut people off is replaced with a call to treat people with love, honour and respect. But it’s hard work!



What do I mean by annoying people? These are people we just don’t gel with — for whatever reason. They’re people who don’t get our sense of humour, or who launch into a third monologue when we’re trying to leave church. They’re those people we don’t particularly see eye-to-eye with, or who are so different that we seem to have nothing in common.

We can’t cut people off ... but can we ignore them a little?

Well, that depends on what we think church is. Is church a place we go to hang out with our friends? Or is it a place where we feel concern and responsibility for others?

At my church, we’ve been really challenged over recent weeks by our sermon series on the vital signs of a disciple of Jesus. One of the subjects was ‘Prayerfully gathering around God’s word’, which focused on church as a family. We gather as family because that’s what healthy families do. Besides, this is the family we will be in heaven with: “We gather imperfectly now, in readiness for gathering perfectly then” (Craig Hamilton).

Discussions in our small groups have also raised some interesting points. We didn’t choose our earthly family; we were born into it. This also holds true for our church family; it’s where God has brought us to, and the people God has placed us with. And, if we are a family, we have certain obligations.

In Mark 3:34-35, Jesus’ mother and brothers come looking for him: *And looking about at those who sat around him, [Jesus] said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Now we don’t know who was seated in this circle with Jesus — but it could have included Peter, who Jesus knew would deny him three times. It could have included Judas, who Jesus knew would betray him. It may also have included a guy who told bad jokes, a woman who laughed nervously at inappropriate moments, a man who went on a bit, and a guy with bad breath. Just because we see them in the Bible doesn’t mean they were practically perfect in every way. We have to assume that being annoying has been a stock pillar of humanity since the fall.

Whoever they were, Jesus expressly says that they are his family. And what does family have that a random collection of people don't? They are bonded by a familial source. They tolerate difference and diversity. There is reason to weather storms together. There is reason to mend broken relationships and heal hurts. They have a sense of responsibility to each other.

As Christians I think it goes even one step more. We are bonded by our unity in Christ. We celebrate difference and diversity. Our church family trains and disciples us to weather storms (Hebrews 10:32-35). We are exhorted to heal broken relationships (Colossians 3:13). We are responsible and dependant on each other (1 Corinthians 12:27, which the TLB translates as "separate and necessary").



Church shouldn't be a place where we go to hang out exclusively with our friends. Of course we will do that, but we also need to open our horizons to those other people sitting in our circle. We need to switch on our 'family radar' to locate those who are struggling, feeling like an outsider, lost, awkward. They may well be annoying — after all, nobody is as funny as we are, and they haven't memorized our plans for the day — but that isn't the point.

The point is that the onus is not on other people to be less annoying; it's on us to be more loving. Proverbs 12:16 reminds us that "the vexation of a fool is known at once", and annoyance does have a sense of provocation in it. Vexation has grounds — and yet reacting is foolish. It's based on me, and what I want. I'm annoyed because what I want isn't being served.

Jesus considered his followers family. We should do the same. And there are reasons over and above following Jesus' example. If we ignored all the people who were not like us, or who were hard work or faintly vexatious, our churches would be pretty cold places. We'd become known for being welcoming only if you fit a certain mould, or had the right sense of humour or level of education.

Jesus gave us the command to love each other as he loved us (John 13:34). He sacrificed himself on a cross. On balance, I'm pretty sure I can chat to someone over tea for ten minutes.

Feeling annoyed reminds me to consciously commit my time at church to God and ask: Who can I bless? Who can I connect with? Who can I help to know that they are part of God's enormous family?

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