CHRIST CHURCH BARNSTON ST MICHAEL'S PENSBY

Dear Friends,

The writer of Ecclesiastes says: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die." Over the past 10 months it has felt in many ways like life has been put on hold, but in reality, this is not the case. The rhythms of life built into the universe by God continue. We have continued to experience the changing seasons and while we may feel less connected to one another, our church family continues to experience highs and lows, laughter and weeping, and life and death.

This reminder that though life feels like it is on hold, in reality its rhythms continue, was brought home to me in a stark way today by two pieces of news I received. The first is that Nicky Tolley's father, David, has died. The second is that Helen Hedderick gave birth to a son, William, earlier today. The apostle Paul tells us: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." The strength of the Christian church is often seen most clearly during these times of life and death, and I'm sure that many will want to get in touch with both Nicky and Helen, to share their sorrow and joy.

It is also a reminder that at these times of online church services we can be tempted to be a consumer Christian. Our local church may not provide the right blend of music and preaching that we are looking for on a Sunday, and at the press of a remote control we can tune out of our church and join in with any church from Seattle to Sydney at no personal cost. We can find a church somewhere on the globe that suits us, without the mess of having to relate to people. Families are messy and in the same way church is messy, but therein lies the pain but also the value of our local church: the people. Of course, we will find something online that better suits our taste, and it has the added bonus of enabling us to tune out emotionally. But as we do that, we leave behind our people, those we are connected to locally, those we need to love and those we need to love us.

Now more than ever we need our local Christian brothers and sisters, we need relationships and thick community. We need to strengthen the bonds which bind us. Though it is harder than ever, it is more important than ever. We may be physically distant but that means we must work harder at being Christians: at rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn. And that means a renewed commitment to our local church. Whether online or in person I look forward to sharing this Sunday with you.

Please do be in touch with Nicky and Helen.

With love in Jesus,

Chris