



Growing Faith

01 - Autumn | 19 October 2020

Thought for the week

Building for the long-haul in uncertain times

Written by Mr Christian Pountain (Head of RE & Director of Spirituality)

Welcome to issue 17 of what, during lockdown, used to be our 'Faith at home' bulletin, but that we have now rebranded our 'growing faith' bulletin. Both initiatives are national C. of E. emphases that seek to bring home, church and school together for the sake of our young people, something we are delighted to endorse at St. Christopher's, here in Accrington. This bulletin retains all the main features of the 16 previous ones, but we have now switched to a half-termly, rather than weekly publication as we seek to respond to the situation in our country and best meet our school community's spiritual needs.

My mind has recently returned to the 29th chapter of the prophet Jeremiah. Verse 11 of that great chapter is well known to us as a school community, as it will be no doubt, to you:

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

These hope-filled words are inscribed into the glass by the front door of our sixth form building and also act as the foundation scripture for our annual Y11 Spirituality Day.

However, perhaps less well known are verses 5 & 6, which are part of the same passage where God speaks to the exiles in Babylon, and instructs them as follows:

"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease."

The building of houses and planting of gardens, marrying and having children all involve decisions with long-term implications. When the children of Israel were wanting to 'run for the hills' (The well-known refrain: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion." From Psalm 137 comes from this period) God was saying "settle down, you're in this for the long haul."

And of course, God was right. The Babylonian exile lasted a full 'three score years and ten' (70 years) fully justifying God's instructions.

Our earnest prayer is that the current pandemic will not last for 70 years, but this term, under God, we have been planning for the long-haul, and doing our very best to ensure that every aspect of our pupils' experiences in school are as comfortable and realistically sustainable over the long-term as possible.

Our deepest desire is that we do not waste this season that we are in, but that we learn, and take each one of these lessons forward with us in life. To this end, please use this bulletin, and particularly the 'church support' section, to get your whole family plugged in to your local church. We know how difficult some of our pupils are finding life at the moment and do not seek to in any way trivialise this, but through the simple twin actions of trust and obedience, we can with full confidence say that though we may not know what the future holds, we know the one who holds the future.

We sincerely hope you find this bulletin helpful.



Our School Song

Why not sing along with this as we worship together.



Teenager's Tip

Our New Normal

By Olivia McCree, our new worship co-ordinator.

Although times are tough and social distancing is annoying we have to stay strong, at some point we will surpass this new normal. We will get back into old habits. It may seem a long time off now and Boris may be getting on your nerves, but remember God has a plan for us and we will get through this.



'God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though it's waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.' - Psalm 46:1-3

In these pressing time use the spare time to do something new.

- Research something new.
- Write out revision notes for incoming exams.
- Do something you love.

And always remember to be positive because although the trees are dropping there leaves we have to remember they are getting ready for a new set a new life.

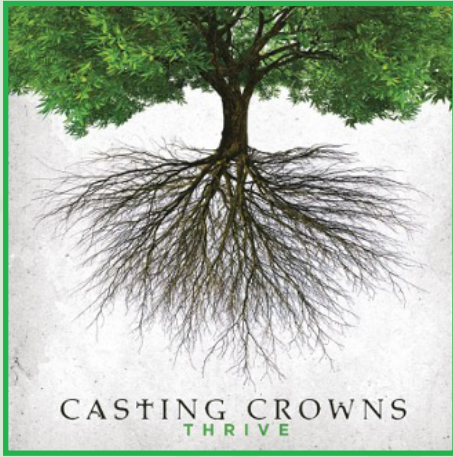
Their New Normal!

FOR I KNOW THE PLANS
I HAVE FOR YOU,
DECLARES THE LORD,
PLANS FOR WELFARE
AND NOT FOR EVIL,
TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE
AND A HOPE.

jeremiah 29:11



Song of the Week



“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”

Psalm 1:1-3

Church Support

Great Harwood Christian Fellowship has a morning service at 10.30am and sermons can be listened to on their [website](#).

There are services on a Sunday at 9.30 in St John's, and 10.30 at St Augustine's. There is usually an online service on their YouTube channel.

A warm welcome awaits you to join us at Rishton, St Peter and St Paul's, for worship, Sunday Eucharist 10am, midweek celebrations Monday and Wednesday 7pm and Thursday 10am. The church is open daily for prayer 9am to 6pm. For more information about worship and activities call Fr Chris 01254 883996 or see our Facebook page.

VISION: Live youth events every Friday night for 11-18s at 7:30pm on Zoom. The perfect end to the week with friends, fun, and chance to chat about God, life and faith. Find out more at [here](#).

Virtual church services at St. John's Baxenden (via zoom - please contact Tom for assistance 07974457544): 9am morning worship and 9am Little zoomers (family service). Physical church gathering - 10am Communion and 6:30pm Reflective service.

Pastor Graham Kissack. Peel Street Baptist Church. Our services and Bible Studies can be found [here](#).

Church services at All Saints Clayton, are now being held at 11am each Sunday - both in person and on [Facebook](#). Friday Praise is on FB each week in term time at 6:30pm

Want to explore the idea of faith in a safe, non-judgemental environment? Want a space to ask the difficult questions? Join Alpha online with St James' Church Clitheroe, Thursdays, 8pm via Zoom. Sign up [here](#).

Prayer for the Week

By Mr Matthew Bradley

Psalm 33 v10-12

The LORD frustrates the purposes of the nations; he keeps them from carrying out their plans. But his plans endure for ever; his purposes last eternally. Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD; happy are the people he has chosen for his own! GNB

Almighty God, happy and blessed are we who know you as Father.

Your ways are always good and true and your plans are the ones to never be undone.

This virus and the worry and pain that it has caused us and our loved ones has humbled us indeed.

Who are we that we think our plans will always succeed as we hope them to?

Help us respond to this global turmoil with humility knowing that you hold all history and all destiny in your hands. You are carrying out your plans which for now seem mysterious to us.


And yet your plans will always be a blessing to those who call you their God. Help us take the medicine of humility and turn to you in faith and praise. We are blessed if we know you as Father through the death of Jesus your Son, that greatest plan of all which could never be stopped or crushed, gives us hope at this time that you work for the eternal prosperity of your people.





Happy are we indeed.

Help our school and all our connected families at this difficult time, looking to you Father as the most trustworthy and mighty God.

Amen.



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