

2nd November 2020

Dear Friends

I am so glad that I used the word 'probably' when I wrote to you last week. By the time you were reading the letter I knew things had changed because of the unexpected announcements the Prime Minister made over the weekend.

To be honest I feel as if I am living through an earthquake that makes me doubt the ground I am standing on. Thank God that Jesus is our rock.

In our worship we have shared the actions to a wonderful song called 'My lighthouse'. We focussed on the themes of building on the rock and shining like a lighthouse. When you are in a storm-tossed boat, a lighthouse is a welcome sight and this week the lyric 'you will carry me safe to shore' resonated with me.

I confess that I am not surprised that there is a new lockdown, but I am troubled and disturbed by the uncertainty and delay.

Above all I am disappointed that the sense of national togetherness has fractured and, in some ways, squandered by people in authority. I really hope that people in our nation can all recover a sense of being in it together. Even if I am not at risk, I may present a risk to someone else, so my behaviour needs to reflect this.

I also want to say that the latest lockdown seems necessary to safeguard the NHS and reduce the rate of virus transmission. Let us pray the time is used well to prepare for the winter and fix the testing and tracing regime. The government has to make unenviable choices so let us pray for wisdom in their choices.

As you will know the church also has to close its doors in November. Closing doesn't mean we have given up seeking to be good news and at New North Road we are doing our best to make resources available to people in different ways.

I commend the recordings or live streaming of worship which we are likely to continue in November with thanks to Dave Carrins for skills in enabling this.

I also commend the opportunities to gather and connect via zoom, the churches what's ap group and the churches website at www.newnorthroad.org.uk. I am grateful to Zahra Mirsaney for her assistance in developing this and encourage you to explore the website from time to time as we add new things. At the moment there is a wonderful image of the window with poppies as we prepare for Remembrance Sunday.

There are still many good things that we can give thanks for and make life worth living, not least the encouraging testimonies of our baptismal candidates who have shared their stories with us over recent months. The Holy Spirit is still moving and it's a great privilege to welcome new brothers and sisters into the family of God. They like us are called to the 'long walk of obedience in the same direction.'

The days ahead of us in this month will be long. In this season we can hold the Christ-light for one another, learning to practise patience and be kind to ourselves and to the people near us. In closing I leave you with the words of Psalm 42.

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"
These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One^[d]
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.
My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.
By day, the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.

Until next week.

Your friend and pastor

Mark