

Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

Proverbs 23 : 18

How much can change in a short while ! Suddenly in just a few short weeks the world is fighting for its life – in so many ways.

As I write this piece we face daily changes in the advice and guidance for responding to the Covid-19 virus. We cannot predict how it will continue to affect individuals and our community. What we do know is that the only way to build from our present position (whatever that may be - now and into the future) is to work together to make the future as positive as possible.

As Christians and as a community we can have a distinctive response to this situation and I would encourage us all to adopt five particular practices during this time.

1. Let's be responsible. In particular, we should all make decisions based on the interests of the most vulnerable in our community. The actions and decisions which are taken may, at times, feel like an over-reaction to those of us who are healthy and best able to withstand the impact of the virus, but following the advice and guidance of those who are best placed to lead us through the challenges to health and the stresses of the present crisis is sensible.

2. Let's not be selfish. There have been many reports of panic buying. It is a human instinct to want to protect and provide for our families, but this kind of behaviour is not the reaction of faith. This is a time for us to learn habits of contentment. Rather than building up stockpiles we could consider donating items or money to local foodbanks and to those in most need.

3. Let's demonstrate faith. Behind the panic that is gripping the world is the fear of death. As Christians who are united with the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus, we can approach the situation with a very different attitude. At this time we should try to live as those who have been set free from slavery to the fear of death – not to be reckless or act inappropriately but to trust in God and our relationship with him.

4. Let's seize the opportunities presented by the virus. We have openings to care for our neighbours, build community, offer prayer and share faith. Let's keep in touch with people using telephones, media and computers to ensure that loneliness and isolation don't become accepted and normal. Let's offer to do those things which we safely can, to help each other – eg collect shopping for those who are isolated and to renew a spirit of neighbourliness.

5. Let's maintain our fellowship. We don't know how our church services and other gatherings are going to be affected in the coming days and weeks but again we have technology and opportunities to share in prayer and build each other up. There will potentially be many who need our care and thoughts and support ; they need to know that it is there in whatever form our fellowship and worship can take.

We must not minimise the challenges facing us all, but the Church (that is the people who are the Church) will do all we can to support each other and those around us during this difficult time.

With thoughts and prayers

Rev Clive Sedgewick

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