

## Thought from the Curate

How many times in recent weeks have we heard the phrase 'new normal' as we look forward to what life might look like post-lockdown, post Covid-19? I have lost count of how many times I have heard it, and I have even said it quite a few times too. But what do we mean by 'new normal,' what will our lives look like?

I know that there are certain aspects of our recent lockdown lives that I hope will continue to be part of that 'new normal'. The reduction in pollution for a start and the huge surge in community spirit that I have witnessed in Hilperton, Staverton and Semington. The heightened recognition of the value of many of our lowest paid workers who are vital to our lives: shop assistants; refuse collectors; public transport workers; those who provide care for our elderly and most vulnerable members of society; teachers, nursery nurses and others essential for the education of our young people; cleaners, porters, health care assistants, not to mention the doctors and nurses of our fabulous NHS. What would be on your list?

Our church communities too have been forced to consider a 'new normal' during the period of lockdown and beyond. We have sought new ways of reaching out to people online or by telephone. New ways of worshipping God together, while maintaining distancing and protecting lives. However, it is not new to the people of God to consider different ways of being the followers of Jesus. At Pentecost, that is 50 days after Easter, (which is celebrated on 31<sup>st</sup> May this year), we remember that the followers of Jesus were all gathered together in one place, when they received the Holy Spirit in a way that has been described like a rushing wind and tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in other languages and enabled those who heard to understand what was said, each in their own language. The Holy Spirit enabled ordinary, simple men (and women): fishermen, a tax collector, a doubter, a cynic, a fanatic, and many more to talk about their faith, to talk about Jesus, in a way that none of them would have found easy beforehand. The earliest followers of Jesus, those that had been with him during his earthly ministry were all faithful Jews who attended the Temple to worship and now they were being joined by many who were not Jews, who could not attend the Temple, and they had to find new ways of being together and worshipping together, they had to find a 'new normal'! It was a 'new normal' that involved sharing meals and belongings; looking after those who were in need; learning, praying and worshipping together; finding new ways of being a community of God without a building or place of worship that they could all attend! A 'new normal' that involved proclaiming the saving grace of Jesus and the everlasting love of God to all that would listen. It was not all 'plain sailing' for the early followers of Jesus, many of them experienced persecution, imprisonment and even death as they sought to live a life of faith and tell the good news of the gospel of Jesus, but they did not allow that to stop them.

So, as we move forward to a 'new normal' let us not lose sight of all the good that has come out of recent weeks. May we each take an active part in considering the values we want to see in our lives and the lives of those around us, and how our lives and our actions will reflect those values. Do not let us be pressured by those around us to abandon the good that has come out of this time for political expediency, the convenience of commerce or the

false status of celebrity figures, instead let us continue to seek the common good for everyone in our communities.

May God bless you as you seek to find your 'new normal'!

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