

Pastoral Letter

Dear (called) leader in the Presbytery of Mary Burnett

“This might be the year that every nation on earth meets their carbon emissions target – and yet no one notices.” Chris Crause

One-liners... not always all that helpful because we know that life is messy and more complicated than that. We might not even notice that the “biggest challenge the world has faced in our life-time” has now moved to something that is so small you need a good microscope to even see it. COVID-19 is disrupting the world. The world will most likely go into recession and meet its carbon emissions targets. And this is claiming lives and destroying livelihoods. A virus is dwarfing almost all other news and concerns we had recently, including climate change, drought, and the bush fires...

And yet sometimes one-liners do offer wisdom; wisdom that was hard gained and then distilled into simple learnings that can be helpful to us in a crisis. Those reading my front-page article each month in our Mary Burnett Newsletter will know that I like closing with a quote. Those quotes are meant to provide some food for thought. It can be something that funnels a lot of talk, deep experience, and thinking into one memorable sentence that I might take with me into the day.

- Victor Frankl, holocaust survivor, tells us “When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.” This looks to me like such a time.
- A time when Carl Jung (Swiss psychiatrist) will remind us “I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.” What/who are we going to be when this is over?

When Officeworks sells out of home office furniture, will this mean that the pattern of working from home will become the norm in some industries? Will electronic meetings become the norm? And our Church? When we don't meet for worship, will I still want to contribute to the community of Christ that I am part of?

How will you lead? What is it you do, that will make others see Jesus reflected in you?

Gallup Inc, according to their biggest global study of what followers want, state:

“The world's 7 billion citizens demand that leadership and institutions lead our nations and the world with (1) compassion, (2) stability, (3) trust, and (4) hope and inspiration for the future.”

Are we the people who can rise to be that? Are we in position to offer these 4 things (and more)? I believe that we are!

Dave Thomas (our chair) has sent you all an email with some really good practical advice and information. This includes a link to the [Synod Advice Page](#) on the COVID-19 Virus. I'd like you to add this list of [congregations that are live streaming or doing on-line worship](#) that Scott Guyatt (at Synod) will update regularly. Please use these resources.

I know this will be a very hard time for our Presbytery and for each individual amongst us. For some this might feel like too much to handle. And so, an invitation from me. Please be assured of my continued prayer for each of our leaders (lay and ordained) in this Presbytery. If you need help, please don't hesitate to ask. If you need to just be heard, call or meet me for coffee (we will sit 1.5m apart) or seek help that our church offers at Presbytery, Synod level or through our agencies. As UnitingWorld tells us, ~~Social Distancing~~ Physical Distancing + Social Solidarity is what is needed.

This is the time when those you have been called to lead, need you. Not some Super(wo)man, but an honest, vulnerable, faithful servant of God and follower of Jesus that they know will listen, try to help, and be there. Love yourself, love your neighbour.

Do not insulate yourself or your church from other Congregations facing these same challenges. As David Busch reminds us "Phone a colleague. Can you help them? Encourage them? Can you share ideas or challenges? Can you pray on the phone together? None of us should face these challenges alone, and online searches can offer only so much. Contact from a colleague will prevent ministry isolation. An adaptation we may need to learn is to be better at inter-dependence and collegiality."

So, my final thought is not a one-liner from a wise psychiatrist or even someone who learned his lessons during the holocaust, but from an old text that was inspired by the Holy Spirit to be included in the book of Numbers (chapter 6)

²⁴ The Lord bless you
and keep you;

(God has always been there when life moves along normally)

²⁵ the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

(God will be there when you need more – God's face-to-face presence, and when you need grace)

²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace."

(And when life turns upside down, remember that God's face is turned towards you... and that God will give you peace... even during this crisis)

This too, will pass

Chris Crause.