

Immanuel, Church Meeting
November 7th, 2021

Thank you

February 2020 was the last time we had a full Church Meeting, and I wonder if that is the longest period Immanuel has not had Church Meetings; looking back now, it seems quite amazing really, because none of us could have ever imagined, back then, that it would be such a long time. And even now, we know that we are still having to be careful, looking after ourselves and each other. This has certainly been a time like no other, a time of uncertainty and a time of changes, where what will be, I guess, will not look like what was. We walk on this journey to realities that will be new. This is a faith journey.

During these months we have tried to affirm the importance of faith, particularly in the midst of what has been so different. Can our faith be constant in such turmoil? And while our faith can be constant, the way it affirms will necessarily be different because the reality we are living is different.

I guess most of us have echoed the psalmist: ***How long, O Lord? ... How long will you hide your face from us?*** (Psalm 13:1). And that was a totally valid question because time was different, and nobody could provide us with long term answers; so - what did we do? Well, we did the best we could as individuals, as part of a family, a community, the church. Probably the most complicated aspect of all COVID19 has been, again in words of the Psalm: ***how long must I wrestle with my thoughts, and every day have sorrow in my heart?*** Be it illness, be it death of a loved one, be it a sense of loneliness, of isolation, or not meeting with friends, not being able to open the church for services... And how many times did we call out ***Look on me and answer, O Lord my God, give light to my eyes...*** I can only recognise the psalmist speaks words I have uttered.

I would like to say a big thank you to all of you; elders who were in constant communication with those on their list, chatting and reminding people they were part of the body, elders who have kept doing this. Elders who were elders when it began, elders who have come into the eldership halfway through this, elders who have ended their term. A thank you to the prayer group, who have kept the spirit of care through prayer alive all this time and have now been able to resume meeting. For the distribution of flowers reminding people we hold them in our thoughts and prayers. To every person who made sure other people were cared for, in so many different ways. This has been the affirmation that we are a Body. Different members all part of the one body. Thank you to the choir as it resumes singing, to Geoff and Shelley who have played, to those who have recorded the service each Sunday, and then sent out the Reflection, the Weekly News, the recording to even in such a way we affirmed our worship. THANK YOU ALL.

As so as the Psalm closes, we can echo those words: ***But I trust in your unfailing love, my heart rejoices in your salvation, I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.*** Even if sometimes we did cry out: ***How long O Lord, how long?***

God bless us and keep us, all of us, in the palms of the holy hands. Amen

Robert H Jordan