

Musings from the Manse Week **22** 16/08/20

COUNTDOWN TO RE OPENING.

30:08:2020 - 14 DAYS TO GO!

GORING

06:09:2020 - 21 DAYS TO GO!

SOMPTING

Psalm 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Following on from last week the subject is change but also challenge and choice. As many of you know we are preparing to open the church for worship. Goring 30 August and Sompting 6 September, all being well. There have been mixed feelings about the date. Some feel it is too soon, others are champing at the bit to get going again. I think I have mentioned this before, but this will be a marathon rather than a sprint. In other words, a steady and careful process. That all sounds very cautious and not really my way of doing things. I generally prefer to cut through the red tape and bureaucracy and get things done. But we all have to embrace change. I have listened carefully to the opinions of many people, and for our particular churches I believe we are making the right choices.

A plea to everyone, please be patient and support one another. These will be strange and challenging times. Even on the day of opening we will be subject to the extensive safety precautions. These will have to be strictly adhered to. Don't see them as a barrier but as a means. Stewards will help and guide you, do not be worried. However, It is up to the individual to make the decision to come back to church. Some people are truly fearful of what the world has become at this time. Whatever is decided by an individual there must be no judgement or criticism. Be prepared for the change and embrace it. Remember it is the Lord who is in control.

There will be some more detailed information about the new way of being church coming to you very soon.

APPROACH REOPENING AS

1. A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT.

It's important to approach this reopening process with a commitment to *persistence*, grounded in the reminder in 2 Timothy 4:7 that we're called to finish the race; not to win the first lap. This means mentally approaching the process of reopening and helping this church navigate COVID-19 as a "marathon"—not a "sprint"—by keeping a long-term view in mind

2. BE WILLING TO TAKE A STEP BACK.

Many of our towns and cities are now experiencing spikes these are where social distancing and taking precautions were ignored—meaning that churches in those communities may have made their reopening decisions in a very different reality.

3. EMBRACE YOUR STRENGTHS.

There is good news: As the church, we are uniquely prepared for this challenging season. We know our identity isn't in the walls that surround us but in our fellowship with Christ and our mission in sharing his saving love with those around us.

Matthew 16:18 - And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

A PRAYER. THAT GOD, GRANT US UNITY.

Within your body, the church Lord, people are of different minds about how to faithfully proceed. Grant us unity so that we might walk together in mind and thought. Some people will still be fearful of large crowds, and some may think it's time to gather all together again like before, unchanged. Show grace to all who may be troubled by this state we are in. Bless O Lord this time of preparation and receive our worship. Amen

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Andrew and Jill