



The Source

May 2021

St John the Baptist Community Church

Chairman of Council – Shane Dowinton

073 430 2827

Church Secretary – Laura Dowinton

083 419 1929

Website: 24riverschurch.com

Email Address: 24riverschurch@gmail.com

*Banking Details: FNB Modimolle, Branch no 260247,
Account no 531 746 01684*

**Thank you for the generous donations that allow us to have
Kingdom impact on our community in so many ways!**

Send your Church or Family News to:

Tilene Viljoen | 079 524 1148 | tilene@obiter.co.za

Design and layout: Sarah Leigh Aub, DocuSynthesis, sarah@docusynthesis.co.za





Chairman's Report

Shane Dowinton

The Easter weekend is already well behind us and with that I tend to notice the cooler mornings and nights and the diminishing light. South African seasons are conspicuously different to each other each with a charm of their own. The Summer has been a good one, full of life-giving rain, and to those of us whose lives are attached to the land, a provision of grass and water for our animals in the coming winter.

I often hear the Lord's whisper in the land and the seasons around me. In fact Solomon saw seasons as opportunities "For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven..."

I guess if we see our present season as a global health and economic crisis then our question as followers of Christ must be **"What opportunity is this season presenting to us?"**



In many respects St John's was confronted with two issues that made the same statement - our worship building burnt down and Covid restrictions forced us to worship outside. These two events have asked us to address key questions: "What is church?" and "How can we do church when we can't relate in the same way?"

I am always impressed by the family of St John's, maybe it's because we are bush folk used to making a plan whenever necessary, but when forced to worship on the front lawn of our burnt building the family gathered, and sung, and prayed, and declared the works of the Lord. On Easter Sunday as we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus I was looking past the congregation at the piles of rubble, stones and wood that had been cleared from the site and heard the beautiful worship being lifted, I suddenly had the image of Sunday overlapping Friday in the context of our Easter weekend. The victory of Jesus on the cross and the enormity of His resurrection life beyond. Church is about people in relationship with the risen Jesus in community with each other. No walls should ever hold us in, the brightness of our light should be seen by the world. Our fellowship declares His glory through the resurrected Christ. This is church!

As I write this my phone is lighting up with notifications on the Prayer Warriors group. Every time it does it reminds me that people are praying. When we first began this group, I found it a little distracting but I decided rather that I would see every prayer notification as realigning me to the church's call to prayer, its connection to the throne room of heaven and its access to our great intercessor, Jesus himself. I don't always have the time to join in but my breathed amen adds to the fragrance of prayer before the Lord and I know heaven is moved because of it. Prayer is the heart of 'church', it is the dialogue of life with God. If the key commands of life are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love each other as we do ourselves, then prayer is the outworking of that as we connect with our loving Father with heartfelt requests and mindful conversation with Him. **This is church!**

Our plans for a new building are nearly complete! Over the last few months, we have met as a representative group of creatives and practical people engaged in rethinking the rebuild of St John's. We will be building on the old footprint and with the old building in mind but we have sought the Spirit's guidance as we know God cares for the details. The building will have hints and suggestions of the old in the new but be an entirely new and modern worship facility.

My brother, Paul, has very kindly offered his services as an architect to us to draw up plans. Paul lives on Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands, and has lots of experience in renovating and building around heritage listed buildings. Some of the buildings on the Island date back 1000 years! He has been very patient in interpreting our wants and needs into a functional and beautiful building design and we are excited at the prospect of this becoming our new worship space. I hope to be able to present this design to St John's in the near future at our AGM and, once we are agreed on the plan as a church, we will be getting on with the build. Exciting times!

The last year has seen us interact with a membership which has become worldwide. We have regular and wonderful input on our prayer group from Germany, the UK, the USA, New Zealand and Australia, Uganda and even Malaysia, as well as countries nearer to us like Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. A great pleasure for us has been making a connection with a church in Shropshire, UK, through Mark and Izzy Warren Smith, who have made the Waterberg a second home.

Newport Christian Fellowship have been wonderfully supportive, particularly when they heard that we had lost the church to fire. But even beyond that, they have chosen to invest in our community need, helping with our Acts of Mercy outreach. I love how they have modelled church in this time. They may be thousands of kms from us but their common love of Jesus makes them a family connection and their heart for our circumstances has been an amazing encouragement. This reminded me of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippian church which had supported him in hard times. Paul is grateful for the gift but suggests that the gift will bear fruit to their church..." I seek the fruit that abounds to your account ... And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." We give thanks for their generosity and look forward to seeing how God uses NCF in Shropshire to further the kingdom.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Blessings

Shane



Holy Waiting

Lucy Calcott



I've become used to the fact that the English are born with a love of queueing. It's not always a bad thing, and it's definitely a lot neater than the South African method (which involves much more 'survival of the fittest'.) Sometimes, though, I think it can be taken a little too far.

We had a lovely sunny couple of days last week, which gave the whole of the UK a great surprise, and our response to this in Cambridge seemed to be an urgent desire for ice-cream. So powerful was this desire that the queue for ice cream (which I joined on Tuesday afternoon) was so long that I wasn't sure whether it ended at the ice cream shop or the nearby bicycle repair shop.

I asked the chap in front of me, 'do you know if this is the queue for ice cream?' And he said, 'I'm not sure. I saw this queue, and I thought 'there must be something important happening', so I joined.' And with hope in my soul that the end of the queue would, indeed, be the ice-cream shop, I felt a deep sense of satisfaction in understanding, so wholeheartedly, the vital English tradition of ubiquitous queueing.

The Bible is so full of waiting that we become blind to it. Abraham waited for a son. Jacob waited for Rachel. Joseph waited for all sorts of things. Mary waited for the fulfilment of the promise that her son would be the Messiah. Jesus waited 30 years to start His ministry. The disciples waited for the Holy Spirit, the whole church is still waiting for Christ's return in glory ... The Bible is packed so full of waiting you just can't get away from it!

But, so often, we completely disregard waiting. It is just this 'thing' that we have to get through in order to get to the good bits. If you're a Christian, maybe you hope that it's God-ordained, but you may feel (even if you don't want to) that that might just make it a 'God-ordained waste of time'.

I've definitely felt that. When I look back on what has happened in my life, I list all the dramatic bits, and forget that most of life has been waiting for something or other. So, when another period of waiting comes along, it somehow always takes me by surprise, sort of like: 'wow, I thought I was done with all that by now.'

In the UK, we have been waiting for coronavirus restrictions to ease, and life has sort of started to take shape around a series of periods of waiting: 'I want to visit so-and-so, but I'll have to wait until such-and-such a date'. The underlying assumption is that this 'waiting' stuff is all just a frustrating (although necessary) waste of time.

I've been studying the book of Hebrews in my quiet times recently, and I was suddenly struck by how I was applying this 'human' understanding of waiting to God.



*Waiting is not just something we have to 'get through'.
Waiting is holy.*

I felt like my eyes had been opened – so much of the big stuff that happened in the hearts of the patriarchs, of the disciples, the prophets, happened in the waiting!

In his waiting in the desert, God transformed David from a fugitive, living among the Philistines and raiding the Geshurites and Amalekites, murdering everyone so they couldn't tell the king, lying to the king of the Philistines and wanting to fight against Israel, to becoming a 'man after God's own heart'. He became the king who was so close to God that Jesus would be directly compared to David in prophecies of the second coming. In a deep sense, it was in the 'wilderness waiting' that David truly became king of Israel – that was where God trained him and prepared him and taught him and drew near to him.

In fact, in Hebrews, talking of the biblical patriarchs, it is written 'all these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.' (Hebrews 11 vs 13), and then later 'These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.' (Hebrews 11 vs 39-40)



Their whole lives were spent in waiting for something that they never received on earth, and this was to the glory of God! This waiting was not a 'roadblock', it was a glorious, holy, God-ordained process of sanctification.

So often I find myself praying 'Lord, give me faith! Lord, I want to trust you!', and then I have to wait for something, and I say 'Lord, take it away!' Waiting is the practical application of faith. Waiting is faith-growing. In fact, it looks like the difficulty of the wait seems to be directly related to the measure of faith grown in us. God's answer to our prayers for faith is often to allow periods of waiting.

Suddenly, as I was looking back across the whole of scripture, I was shocked at how so much of it could really be described as a 'manual on active, Holy waiting'. It is the attitude of our hearts in periods of waiting that is our faith litmus-test.

To turn back to the well-known story of Abraham's wait, 'Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead ... Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' (Romans 4 vs 20-22)

Abraham's attitude in waiting gave glory to God. 'Faith' is simply another word for the right attitude while waiting. Waiting is where all the 'stuff' happens! It might be painful, but that is growing pain.

This 'holy waiting' is gloriously summed up in Hebrews 12: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and that so easily entangles. And let us... fix our eyes on Jesus. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.'

Next time we are asked to wait, we should rejoice, because it means that God has picked up His tools and is shaping us into vessels for His glory.



Dealing with disagreements

Hendrik Viljoen



Human relationships can be complicated. How often our relationships with people steal our joy and peace? That is when the idea of becoming a hermit who lives totally isolated on some high mountain sounds wonderful. But no, that is not the answer. Human beings are created in a family and from the start we need to get along with others in our family and community.

Let us consider Philippians 4 to see what the Word of God teaches on this topic.

When I think of Philippians 4, what comes to mind first is the well-known verse 4 **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.”** And then vs 7 **“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

But interesting enough the heading of this chapter is not ‘peace’ or ‘rejoice’. It is ‘Closing appeal for steadfastness and unity.’

The chapter starts with a reference to two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Vs 2: **“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.”**

Who were these ladies whom the apostle Paul addressed in his letter to the church in Philippi? We may get an answer in vs 3: **“Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”**

Euodia and Syntyche were Christians who belonged to the congregation in Philippi. These ladies were dynamic Christians who had worked at Paul's side. But clearly there was some trouble between them, some issue that hindered them in being of the same mind in God.

In order to have the joy and peace mentioned in Philippians 4 we must first address the issues that are standing in the way of our joy and peace. And that often has to do with relationships with our brothers and sisters.

Sometimes the problem comes when we want our brothers and sisters to agree with us all the time. And when they do not, we become upset, angry, hurt, and lose our peace and joy. We may believe that there should not be disagreements if people are Christians. That differences of opinion are wrong and sinful. And that my opinion usually is the right one – the other person must just repent and come round to seeing it that way.

Note that Paul asks of Euodia and Syntyche to be of one mind in the Lord. He does not tell them to agree about everything in life, but to be of one mind in the Lord. We may disagree about many things but if we agree that Jesus is Lord of our lives, that we love Him first and then love each other as we love ourselves, we may be able to handle our disagreements differently.

The fact is, in relationships conflict will be a reality. As two people with different perspectives, backgrounds and personalities attempt to live or work together, disagreements and differences will surface. Conflicts cannot be avoided, but they can be dealt with in a positive way.

First, understand that **differences of opinion are no cause for alarm**. A conflict simply means you have a relationship and with that comes differences of opinion. There is truth in the saying that if two people always agree then at least one of them is not thinking.

Secondly, especially among Christians, it is **important to view each other as a member of the same team** – at least we are of like mind in Christ. Therefore, we should never behave disrespectfully towards each other, even if we do not agree.

In Philippians 4 we find some keys here how to approach our relationships and retain our peace.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



In the first place we must focus on the Lord and rejoice (v4). He will always give you reason to rejoice. Secondly, our gentleness must be evident in our relationships (v5). A gentle person will not insist on being right and getting their own way all the time. This may seem counterintuitive because we live in a time where the world conditions people to be aware of their rights and to fight to protect these perceived rights at any cost. We can afford to be gentle, because the Lord is near – He will protect you and make things work out for the best of all involved if you rejoice in the Lord and remain gentle.

And if a relationship or difference of opinion causes anxiety, we are told in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving to present our requests to God (v6). If we take the issue causing anxiety to Him, He will give us His perspective on the matter – and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (v7).

Philippians 4 also gives us a handy filter for our thoughts about people and our experiences with them. This filter will allow only the good through and will help us to be of one mind in Christ:

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

If we choose to focus on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable, excellent and praiseworthy in a relationship instead of mulling about the perceived or real wrongs, we pave the way for peace to rule despite our differences in character and opinion. And with that comes the promise - And the God of peace will be with us all.

Conflict in human relationships is a given, how we deal with it should differentiate us from the world. Focus on what unites us, our love for the Lord, not the issue that caused the conflict. Then we will be able to resolve the conflict with a gentle spirit. Apply the filter for our thoughts provided in v8. Let us remind ourselves continuously to think about the right things, not to mull over perceived slights and disagreements.



True Christianity is
not religious

Juliet Calcott



I recently shocked the company present at a dinner party by claiming that Christianity is not a religion. *"What?"* our friends gasped. *"Surely..."* *"But isn't Christianity a matter of obeying the ten commandments?"* one person asserted. - *"Yes, surely, it's a rule of life,"* another suggested. *"No, not at all,"* I declared. The company glanced at Phil to bring some sanity, and he quietly agreed with me.

So ... if being a Christian is not a matter of being religious, what is it?

Good question.

In recent times, we have had a number of wonderful messages, some of which I have listened to more than once. It's actually great to have messages delivered by WhatsApp as one can listen to the message again and again so that the content really sinks in.

Some that have stood out for me particularly in recent times were along a theme:

Firstly, Dorothee Engers' message on the 7th Feb about our face to face intimacy with the Lord. My Mum used to sing: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace."

Dorothee used the wonderful sentence: "We are created for eye contact with our Maker."

She shared a lovely image of a dog eagerly responding in obedience to the master, but also able to lie down peacefully at the master's feet and rest as opposed to an untrained neurotic collie who dashes about nervously annoying everyone.... or a stubborn dachshund determined to do his own thing...

Then Phil recently spoke about "Abiding" and how abiding in Psalm 23 prepared him for his stroke in such an amazing way.... And how all things are added to those who seek first his Kingdom...

Nick Farrant spoke about having a special place and time set aside for time with the Lord and how he has stuck scriptures up in his office as reminders of what the Lord is telling him.

Bill Johnson spoke recently about hearing God and how a precondition for hearing is being willing to obey and then taking the time to really listen

Vibrant, life-giving relationship is at the heart of our faith.

At the dinner party, some of our friends were astonished and quite non-plussed when we talked about a relationship with God and how the invitation to **know God and relate to Him is actually what it is all about**

It was quite thrilling to recently hear Archbishop Justin Welby and his wife discussing exactly this with Nicky Gumbel. It was when they each realised that it was a relationship by grace alone that the Lord was after, that they were able to surrender their lives to Him and start on the adventure of their lifetime.



This has challenged me afresh. All of us need to check ourselves ... that we are actively walking with the Lord and have not lapsed into a religious frame of mind

Those who know the Shepherd will follow him... they will know his voice and be led by him

What is the purpose of my life? How can I produce the fruit of the spirit? Am I praying prayers that will be answered? How do I walk in close fellowship with the master?

At times, I have walked so closely with the Lord and had the thrill of hearing his voice and knowing his empowering presence. At other times, I have walked at a distance and the walk has been without that thrill of encounter and intimacy ... and I have been left with a sense of missed opportunities ... and of missing the mark....

Where are you today? As one person once put it, "We can be as close to Jesus as we want to be" His invitation is clear "Come!" It is for us to respond....

There are so many things that can keep us away. It may be the cares of life that choke our spiritual life; it may be laziness and distraction there are so many ways to be entertained and our hearts are so easily hardened by the movies we watch or the chatter of social media...

Now is the time ... the special time on earth that we are given ... where we are given time and some sense of autonomy in how we choose to use that time ... what we think about, what we do, what we say ...

How do we walk with God in the way he wants us to? How do we keep fruit in keeping with repentance? How do we pray the prayers that God answers? How do we know His will for us?



For me, the best place to start to answer these questions in John 15.

Vs1 *I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener...*

Jesus is the TRUE vine ... "I am the way, the truth and the life," he tells us in John 14:6

The gardener is God himself He is the one who prunes for fruitfulness ...

Where am I?

I'm **in** the vine.

What must I do?

Vs 4 *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you."* In the older versions the word *abide* is used.

This abiding is really, really important so, as I read this, I am wondering "Lord, how do I abide? How do I remain?"

Then this incredible line: vs 4

NO BRANCH CAN BEAR FRUIT BY ITSELF, IT MUST REMAIN IN THE VINE. NEITHER CAN YOU BEAR FRUIT UNLESS YOU REMAIN IN ME.

Wow! Just think of that? Think of all the human endeavour that takes place outside of the vine and down through history even ostensibly spiritual stuff that was engaged in by rote without any living connection to the vine all the stuff that can come to our minds to do that has no eternal or life-giving value

Then, in case we are feeling a bit lost Jesus makes completely clear where we fit into this picture...

Vs 5 *I am the vine; you are the branches.*

Then we are given the mirror image of vs 4

IF A MAN REMAINS IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT; APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.

If I have a baby and I feed it regularly it will grow.... I do not make it grow God does that bit But I need to do my part to feed, shelter and cuddle my baby.

If I have a fruit tree I need to fertilize and water it But I cannot make it grow or produce fruit ... God does that bit.

It is the same in my spiritual life If I abide in him.... so that the sap of his life flows into meI will produce beautiful fruit ... This will not be because I try to It will be something He produces in and through me

If I try to be a marvellous Christian, I will be overwhelmed and soon find that I am simply unable to do and be all that I think I should do and be.

That is works ... that is religion ... and it is exhausting ...

So – what is it that I need to doOh, yes, there is something I need to do and it goes much deeper than superficial activity

Jesus has not yet told us in this passage HOW it is that we are to remain. Repeatedly he has told us to **remain**. The way Jesus spoke invites us to meditate and mull every word he speaks over and over ... until the fullness of what he is teaching settles in our heartsso let's stay with Him and follow his message as he delivers it ...

Vs 4a **Remain in me, and I will remain in you**

Vs 4b **Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me**

Vs 5 **If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit**

Then in Vs 6 ... **A terrible warning: If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.**

I have heard people try to soften these words in different ways ... but they are a pretty stark warning.

It would be similar to telling a new mother "If you do not feed your baby every day, she will wither and die..."

Or telling the gardener "If you do not water your fruit trees, they will wither and die ..."

This is the principle of all life. Ask any farmer ...

Jesus is warning us that this applies to spiritual matters, too. Rebirth has grafted us into the vine ... and the living sap of the Lord Jesus Himself flows into us ... But this is a tremendous and precious access that we dare not take for granted ...

We all have different temperaments ... But for me, the seriousness of this is motivating and activating ... Jesus grabs my attention and helps me grasp the gravitas of this situation He is not an extra in my life He is my lifeI need Him as much as I need oxygen and water and food

Throughout scripture we are told of the benefit of the Fear of God Those who fear the Lord will lack no good thing we are told ... "Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing" Psalm 34:9

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ...

The fear of the Lord keeps us SAFE It is a wonderful thing it keeps us aligned to truthit helps us to resist sin, to resist peer pressure, to choose what is right over what is convenient

But I still want to know How, Lord? How do I remain?



Bill Johnson describes a turning of the heart to the Lord. That inner space inside me Do I allow Jesus to fill that up? When I lay down my head at night, does my heart turn to Him or am I filled with the stuff of the world

The handle to the door of my life is on the inside ...

Rev 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door and knock ... if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me*

Nick Farrant talked about a time and place for a quiet time with Jesus. That helps so much as it sets us up for the day ...

Phil Calcott spoke of worship and meditation two ways that I can tune myself to heaven and allow the sap to flow in

Clare Losty spoke of consciously receiving the Lord through the beauty of a sunset or beautiful music or a baby's smile ...

Becoming conscious of Him is the key connecting the beauty to him allowing relationship with him to flow into my life ...

The next verse holds something that seems to be one of the special keys to abiding
Again, one that Bill Johnson practises in such a powerful way

Vs 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you.

I think of my mother planting seeds for the new season First in her seed boxes,
carefully covered with straw and then, once germinated planting out the little
seedlings

Do we tenderly nurture the word of God in our hearts like that hiding his word in our
hearts ... mulling it over ... asking him for understanding?

Right along with this comes an incredible promise:

*Vs 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it
will be given you.*

And then Interestingly Vs 8 *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit,
showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

What a glorious invitation, what an exciting challenge!



The importance of encouragement

Lessons from the
life of Barnabas



Shane Dowinton

These are not easy times. The last ten months have been a challenge to say the least. I actually have to be careful how much news I digest because there is rarely anything to get excited about. Recently, I was feeling pretty low and trying to find my usual self again, I found myself praying under my breath one morning “Lord, I could really do with some encouragement today”. That evening I received a text from a friend who had noticed my melancholy and sent the most wonderfully encouraging word to me. It literally spun me around, filling me again with strength, resolve and even joy. How powerful a word of encouragement can be.

There is no doubt that in a global pandemic such as we are experiencing there are times and reasons to become despondent, even in non-challenging times we experience moments of frustration, weariness and fear. We all need a word that picks us up at some time or another. Written into its own structure the word encouragement implies being strengthened and given courage. We are to be intentional about strengthening each other.

In the narratives of the early church described in Acts there is a man who was known for his encouraging nature. In fact, scripture explains that his own name, Joses, had been dropped and his nickname Barnabas, ‘son of encouragement’, was preferred.

Barnabas figures often in the stories of Acts and in the letters of Paul so we can glean some insight into this positive character.

Barnabas sold a plot of land and gave the money to the church. Here’s a man who’s prepared to put his money where his mouth is. He is committed and invested, literally. He shows us that he believes in this fledgling and somewhat chaotic new body of believers. They are new to the idea of ‘church’ and learning as they go along, making mistakes and probably stepping on toes. But here is a man who demonstrates commitment, support and belief in what is happening. His non too small contribution is an encouragement to this band of disciples.



Later we find Barnabas bringing Paul to Jerusalem to introduce him to the Apostles. Paul doesn't have the best reputation among the believers. He has literally been persecuting the church for years, giving approval to their murder, rounding them up and jailing them with great passion and zeal. But Barnabas has seen another side to him since his encounter with Jesus - he has seen genuine change, and he believes that this is no act. Wouldn't all of us want a friend like that? Someone who has chosen to make the past the past, someone who has seen potential in us, someone prepared to endorse us when our history suggests otherwise?

The word for encouragement in New Testament Greek is 'Paraklesis' which means 'a calling to one's side'. It comes from the same root word that we get Holy Spirit, Paraklete, 'one who comes alongside'. Encouragement, or strengthening, is a character trait of Holy Spirit. He comes alongside us when times are tough and He gives us courage; He stands for us when we face accusation; He speaks the truth over us when who we are in Him is being attacked. This is encouragement.

And it stands to reason that as followers of Jesus, filled with Holy Spirit, we can become partners as ones who can come alongside, encouraging each other.

There is also another great Barnabas story. On the first mission trip to Turkey something has gone awry in the relationships and John Mark has returned home. Now, about to set off on a second mission Paul has refused to take him again. It obviously stirred up some hurt because Paul continued without him but Barnabas chose to break with Paul and stand with Mark. We don't know the details but we do know the outcome. Mark is believed to have written the gospel after his name, and even Paul came around later and asked for him to come to help him while he was in prison in Rome. Whatever the issue was, Barnabas chose to believe in his friend Mark and stay alongside him, and who knows, maybe it was that belief in him that encouraged him back on track.

An encourager chooses to believe in the potential of another, he chooses to stand as advocate for him even if his behaviour seems to defy it. It's the way of the world to discard relationships when they have gone wrong, to choose to distrust, to give up on or to cut off a relationship. This is not the way of Jesus, and it's not the way of us who follow him.

What if we chose to believe in people, to call out the good in them, to see the gold even when it's buried deep? What if we stood by people when the world wants to cut them off, call them out or shut them down? What if we chose to only speak good over people?

I believe a chief tactic of the enemy is to attack our identity, he wants us to believe lies about ourselves so that we will choose not to believe who God says we are. In a world that loves to gossip, slander and disparage a person, he finds plenty of ways to get that job done. The follower of Jesus should not be a part of that system. We get to see people as Jesus sees them, through the lens of the cross – forgiven, redeemed and restored. We have no right to call them by their past, we get to call them by their identity in Him, as children of God, filled with hope and a purpose.

We can be part of the rot. The world that hates and pulls apart the character of its neighbour. Or we can choose to pull the positive from a Kingdom that would never do that.

I want to stir you today to be a Barnabas; to choose to believe in people; to come alongside when the chips are down. It's as simple as a text, or a note or a conversation. Choose to build someone up today.

We are living in times of inevitable discouragement, what if we chose to not be discouraged but instead to be encouragers, pointing to Jesus, revealing the light and the hope and the good news found in Him. Surely in the times of greatest darkness the light shines the brightest!





Family News



Cobus and Marilize Greyling welcomed their son, **Pieter Nicolaas Greyling**, on 13 April 2021.



Livingstone Banda is the headboy at the Waterberg Academy for 2021!

Summe and Karabo Kamupambe became the proud parents of **Rachel Mia Kamupambe** on 13 January 2021.



*"It is more blessed to give than to receive."
Acts 20:35*



Acts of Mercy

Peter Farrant and Grace Ismail have been driving our Acts of Mercy outreach in the Waterberg community. This initiative supports people and families who are without or with little income. There have been some very generous donations to this cause and at present we are dealing with this in two ways. Grace and other social workers are identifying those who are in need and we are putting together food parcels for them alongside collecting warm clothes and blankets for broad distribution. The chronically ill also receive nutritional supplements.

Should you feel inclined to support these initiatives you can either donate financially into the St John's church bank account and reference it Acts of Mercy, or you can also donate food, warm clothes or blankets etc and contact Grace directly on 072 828 3788 to arrange drop off in Vaalwater.

LETHABO



kid's club

Saturday morning Bible study: Marilyn Cook reports that the Bible study has seen steady growth with more than 30 kids attending consistently. The kids are using Bibles which were purchased with funds specifically raised for this purpose.

The **Sunday school** is also averaging over 40 kids every Sunday morning. After the lesson every child receives something to eat.

Mission2SA also drives a **WhatsApp group for the youth** that communicates nightly, where they read scriptures and have Biblical topic discussions. The youth are now concentrating on evangelism and want to start going out in a group to reach out to others. Once they get started they will need more Bibles so that they can ensure that people who accept the Lord will have a Bible.

Please keep Marilyn and those who are teaching - Godfrey, Hellen and Johannes - in your prayers that the Lord will guide them and continue to speak His word through them.

FNB Account
Vaalwater, Branch Code # 258629
M.J. Cook T/A St John Soup Kitchen Acc. # 628 4130 2285



Marilyn with happy children who received school shoes from Mission2SA