Dear all,

**Briefing 17: Wednesday 10th June, 2020.**

***“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2***

Last week I wrote a little about the brutal killing of George Floyd, the issue of racism in the church and society, and suggested some truths to bear in mind when we are thinking through these issues. I hope it was useful.

Things have moved on of course, we’ve had many more people sharing their experiences and demanding change, there have been large demonstrations on both sides of the Atlantic, and statues have been torn or taken down.

How are we to make sense of all this? Particularly if the kind of racism and inequality being spoken of hasn’t been our experience. Let me suggest 2 ways: We can talk and we can listen.

Last weekend I listened to 2 podcasts and read a great Blog on the topic of racism– the links to which are below. These are Christians writing and speaking about their experiences and trying to reflect on them in a Biblical way. You might find them helpful too. Most of the coverage we see on TV is in hostile soundbites; these pieces are more considered, but I’m sure you will still find them disturbing. The world they describe is a world I know nothing about, but it is the experience of our brothers and sisters in Christ in the UK and USA.

One of the podcasts moved me to ask members of our church family about their experiences. Some of those conversations were heart-breaking. It’s one thing hearing stories from across the Atlantic or from the UK from people you don’t know and have never met. They can be terrible stories, but it’s so much more moving when the stories come from people you know and love. The stories, the struggles, were there all along- I’d just never asked the right questions. And so I didn’t know. I didn’t know the burdens nor the worries nor how to pray. I’m better informed now. I can pray better now.

Bearing one another’s burdens starts there doesn’t it. It starts with real conversations about things that matter, not just small talk about the weather and the footy. It starts with asking better questions, as we take a real, love-motivated interest in one another (we are family after all.) And of course, it is reliant on us giving honest answers, being ‘real’ with one another, being willing to share the things with which we struggle. And that is only possible when there is trust… and trust takes time and conversations and love to build. But as those things are put in place, we can truly start to walk alongside one another and bear one another’s burdens as we are called to do.

Of course, in a church like ours there will be many issues beneath the surface, not just racism. Marriage problems, work place problems, financial worries, health worries. Worries about our children, our parents, our neighbours, our spouse, our future. Some of those problems will have practical solutions, and where possible I’m sure we want to be able to meet those needs individually, as home groups, and as a church family. That kind of generosity marked out the early church where the generosity was such that Acts 4 reports that as a result ‘*there was no needy person amongst them*.’

I hope you feel that there are at least some people in our church family with whom you can have those kinds of gritty conversations. Perhaps in a home group, a prayer group or with a couple of friends. But let me encourage you to widen that circle, and to reach out to others, to talk with them, listen to them, to really get to know them and their struggles. And when people reach out to you, can I encourage you to open up a little more than you might have done before, so that we can walk alongside one another. Let’s never be too proud to ask for help or prayer. I know that isn’t very British, nor very Anglican. But it is truly Christian, and it will allow us to support and encourage one another as we all our walk our different and often difficult paths through this valley of tears.

The lockdown may be easing, but the struggles in our country and the injustices of the world will continue until Jesus returns. Let’s make sure we are not letting someone walk that road alone. Let’s be a church that bears one another’s burdens, just as our LORD carried ours.

Yours in Christ,

*Dave*

*Notices and Updates…*

**READING FOR SUNDAY:** If you want to read the passage ahead of Sunday, it is Romans 3: 9-20.

**NIGEL BROWN’S FUNERAL:** Nigel’s funeral will be on 16th June at 2pm at Harwood Park. Whilst there can be only a few invited guests present, everyone is invited to watch the live stream. The link has been sent round, if you have mislaid it, please contact Alison Hare who will send it to you again.

**WALKING AND TALKING:** With lockdown restrictions now somewhat eased, I’ve enjoyed a number of socially distanced walks and chats with people. If you no longer need to shield yourself, why not do the same? It’s a great way to ease yourself back into society and enjoy being out in God’s glorious creation.

**SOMETHING FOR YOUR SOUL…**

**BLOG of the week:** <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/george-floyd-and-me/>

**PODCASTS of the week:**

**Speak Life: George Floyd, Race and the Church:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqRcZ-YFzQU>

**Black Berea: Racism and Riots**: <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/episode-62-racism-riots/id1208453121?i=1000476646080>

**THE LATEST VIDEOS…**

There is a new **all age family worship service** available – this time on the parable of the lost sheep! Do take a look. **PLEASE** remember to **share**, **like** (that’s the thumbs up sign!) and **leave your** **comments** to any video you watch! Our YouTube Channel is at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzRGAaIRTsJuKFRBvkLjAtQ>

**REMINDERS…**

**PREVIOUS** **LETTERS AND INFORMATION:** These can all be accessed via our websites or Facebook pages.

If you’d like to lead the **PRAYERS** or do the **BIBLE READING** for our on-line service, please get in touch!

**KEEPING IN TOUCH:** Please do keep going with the **4UP/4DOWN** challenge and call people regularly and let me or Lynda Matthews (Pastoral Team leader) know of any concerns you have. Let’s not let ‘lockdown fatigue’ stop us from loving one another.

**SERVICE DOWN A TELEPHONE LINE:** A reminder that our ‘*service down a telephone line*’ is now up and running. The message will be updated every few days with Evening Prayer services and the Sunday sermon. Simply dial this l**ocal number 01438 907143** (you’ll need the area code as well), and listen.

**PRAYER**: We are still gathering on Tuesday mornings from 7am to 8am for a virtual prayer meeting. If you’d like to join us, send me an email and I’ll send you an invite.

**NEED HELP?** Do ask! We are a family after all.If you or a neighbour need help that you can’t provide, contact Herts Help on 0300 123 4044 or via [https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx](about:blank).