

**Weekly Devotions  
South Holburn Church  
9<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**READINGS**

For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

**Jeremiah 29: 11-13 (NLT)**

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

**Philippians 3:1-14 (NIV)**

"I have learned that faith means trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse."

**Philip Yancey**

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

**Corrie Ten Boom**



## REFLECTION

Hindsight is a wonderful thing! I know from my own experience that looking back often lets you see what you should have done at various points in your life. I am sure that that is true of all of us.

There is nothing wrong with looking back. Indeed, it's an important part of understanding, of learning and even of faith. We can learn from the past, we can see what worked and what did not. And it is often in looking back that we can identify those times when God has been working in our lives, even though it did not seem like it at the time.

Looking back is important, BUT... only if we look back with honesty. There is no point in looking back with rose tinted spectacles on and imagining that everything was better, that people were nicer, that life made more sense, that we never made any mistakes. That is just not true.

And looking back is important, as long as it is not the only thing that we do.

As the vaccination process continues, we can see the light ahead at the end of the tunnel of the Covid-19 pandemic. We can begin to look forward with hope to a time beyond lockdown, beyond restrictions, beyond Covid. That's something that we have not been able to do for some time. We can begin to think about the future and what it might be like. Folk have said that Covid has reminded us of the things that are important to us, that the world will never be the same. But I am not so sure. It will be very easy to slip back into the old ways of doing things unless we really focus on what it is that we want the world after Covid to be like. If the world is going to be different, we have to make the effort to secure that difference. We have to commit to the changes.

Our readings today show us that God is not just all about the past. God is with us now, and God calls us to vision and faith going forward.

Looking forward then we can ask what do we want from the Church? What do we want the church to be like? After all this time when the Church has either been closed, or only open on a very limited basis, what is it that is important to us about the church?

On a personal level, what does faith mean to you now? After Covid how will faith impact on your life? How will you live your faith? What do you think God is asking of you in the weeks and months ahead?

Just like the world around us, the Church too will slip back into the old routines, and the old difficulties, after Covid, if we do not put the effort into asking what it is that God is calling our church to be in the future, and if we do not commit to the changes.

Perhaps in these months as the vaccination process reaches more and more people and we begin to think about coming out of lockdown and about life beyond Covid restrictions, we might spend some time prayer and reflecting about what we have learned from these difficult times and about where God is calling us and the church in the future.

## PRAYER

Loving God,  
Eternal one,  
God the past, the present and the future.

You have reminded your people again and again  
That life is not without reason,  
That history is not without direction,  
That you have a purpose for our living.  
We can look back and recognise so many times  
When the fingerprints of your love are stamped all over our experiences.

Everlasting Lord  
In these days teach us to trust in you,  
Refresh our vision,  
That we might see how you are calling us forward,  
Open our eyes,  
To recognise the next step, the next stage, the next episode  
In our journey as your people.  
Deepen our faith so that we will not falter,  
So that we step forward trusting in your purposes always.

In Jesus name we pray,  
Amen.



## *Hope Gatherings – Wednesdays in February (Week Two)*

**We continue to meet on Wednesday nights at 7:30 (Virtual Vestry from 7-7:30 p.m.) throughout February to discuss how we can get through this latest lockdown and thrive in this time of isolation.** We will discuss different themes as we move through the month that will help us to better cope with what is before us. This week we will talk about the need to take “deep breaths” and about how to use meditation and reflection as positive tools in these difficult times. We will spend some time reading about the “breath” of God in both the Old and New Testaments, and we will pray together.

1. **Spend some time meditating on the goodness of God.** Beautiful scenes of nature and worshipful music can put you in the mood to read Scripture or to meditate on who God is or on how much he loves you. Try watching this video to relax: [youtube.com/watch?v=nITX\\_-ckgVo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nITX_-ckgVo). Listen to the lovely hymns and beautiful sounds and watch the scenery. Why not try a few minutes of music and meditation first thing in the morning, before going to bed or as a midday “snack” to keep you going spiritually! Engaging in this way can often lead to Bible reading, journaling and prayer, which are all good ways to gain perspective on life.
2. **Learn to take deep breaths. Breathing deeply helps us feel refreshed and relaxed.** Take a minute now to shut your eyes and notice your breathing. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. It feels pretty good doesn't it? It is amazing how simple actions can restore our peace in anxious times.
3. **Take care of yourself.** “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (I Corinthians 6:19). What a great time this can be for eating right, exercising, and getting a good night's rest. During lockdown we have less activities going on, so perhaps we have more space to make homemade meals, go for a walk in the middle of the day, and sleep for those extra hours we've saved not driving around so much. What better time to develop new hobbies and to evaluate how you can serve God and others!
4. **Keep up routines.** Yes, it may be fun to wear pajamas for a few days during a snowstorm or annual leave, but right now it is important to get up, get dressed, and keep a routine. You will feel much better if you can make plans for the day and even a list of things you might want to accomplish around the house or for work. Make sure you set the alarm to get up and have some goals for the day. It is amazing how healthy routines can be for our lives. Adding daily bible reading and prayer into your schedule, can be a great routine to get started right now!
5. **Stay connected to others!** If you are living on your own, contact at least one person (preferably via phone or video call where you can see each other or hear each other's voice). Email is great, but it can be hard to communicate this way since we do not often get an immediate response, and we can easily misunderstand what others are saying since we do not hear inflections or tone. **The following is some information that was in last week's summary that bears repeating.** Why not come to the Virtual Vestry? Maybe there is a friends' WhatsApp group you could organize? Posting a letter can brighten your day or lift someone else's spirits. It can be easy to want to withdraw from others when we are feeling overwhelmed or sad, but when we push ourselves to make contact, we will be reminded that we are not as alone as we might feel. We will also be helping someone else to feel loved too!

Meanwhile, plan to come out on Wednesday night to discuss your thoughts on navigating this recent lockdown and how we might help each other to negotiate it. We will hear Scripture and spend time in

prayer too! To enter the Virtual Vestry, go to the church's website ([southholburn.org](https://southholburn.org)) and scroll down for the Zoom Meeting link.

Below are a few helpful resources you might want to check out.

[nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/](https://nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/)

[bbrfoundation.org/blog/how-stay-mentally-healthy-amidst-covid-19-pandemic?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6t6ABhDMARIsAONIYyw9zBiVBKegWyS-JktX5k-Yknn2JssIMjirGp](https://bbrfoundation.org/blog/how-stay-mentally-healthy-amidst-covid-19-pandemic?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6t6ABhDMARIsAONIYyw9zBiVBKegWyS-JktX5k-Yknn2JssIMjirGp)