

Caring Community

I suggest one of the biggest challenges of this time of dealing with Covid-19 has been what is known as 'social distancing'. Or as some emphasise, we may want to think more of 'physical distancing' - we are not to be too close to one another but we do want to support one another and *be sociable*. Relating may look different but we want to help and care as much as we can. We see some very admirable examples of this in local communities and in news headlines.

But we do feel the painful reality of not being able to relate as we might like to - not being able to give a loved one a hug – or not being able to see certain loved ones. Some restrictions are changing, but life is certainly not what we would want it to be like.

This is understandable because relationships are part of life. Good relationships matter. We feel it is not right when we are too isolated; or when it is the wrong kind of relating - when we are with people who we don't feel safe with.

Some people may be screaming "please give me some space", and others "please give me some company".

Positive loving community is what God calls us to have in life - expressed in loving families - but in friendship networks, communities, clubs and societies, places of work and of course churches. We feel the pain as a local church - we long to gather together. We have Zoom services and various ways of keeping connections which help - but nothing beats face-to-face.

Relationship is a part of us. Because as people we reflect something of who God is. God is a relationship - a Family of three - something I've said many times is earlier talks. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit - One God who is an eternal relationship of three persons enjoying each other. A distinctly Christian and unique understanding of God is. This Sunday is known as Trinity Sunday (isn't every Sunday!)

Jesus tell us *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'* (Matt 28:19)

If we are not people who know God is Trinity, we are not Christian. This God family is who we worship, adore and enjoy. Who we best find our security, identity, value and pleasure in - by knowing His love.

Hanging round with people who care and want to spend time with us makes all the difference. God delights when we want to spend time with Him - and we are better for it when we hang round with the living God.

Jesus prays to the Father for us to have something of what He has got - for us to connect with God and be more connected with one another - to be more like the Persons of the God Family are with each other:

'... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (John 17:21)

We don't become God, but we relate *to* God and because of that are far more likely to relate well to one another.

We should want the best kind of relationships we can have. For ourselves and for others. That means speaking out against abuse and exploitation. That means modelling kindness and forgiveness, thoughtfulness and care – which is harder to do when people wind us up.

At the end of this dreadful time of Covid-19 we should and must really appreciate the value of positive relationships, and positive community.

As a local church we long to meet up again face to face. I have no idea at this stage what that that might look like but I know this. I'm glad God is here. I'm glad God is *the* relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I'm glad that those persons are there for us to help us and bless us, and we are never alone. We can spend time with God: with the Father, with the Son- Jesus, with the Holy Spirit.

Life is not ideal now. It's not as it should be. We know that. It affects the way we relate. But we have God who calls us to relate to Him, and all us to care and share – to be people who relate well to those around us.

AMEN